

Michael Monroe Stevenson

It is with great sorrow and affection that we announce the gentle passing of Michael Monroe Stevenson age 101, on Sunday October 6th, 2024, in Victoria, British Columbia. Michael, known to many as “Micky”, will be best remembered for his love and devotion to family and friends, for his disarming humour, and for his persistent pursuit of excellence in both mind and deed.



Michael was born to George and Greta Stevenson on April 12, 1923, in Redcar, Yorkshire, England where he joined sister Maureen and brother Denis. The young family immigrated to Canada just 10 months following Michael's birth.

Upon their arrival in Canada Michael's family travelled west to British Columbia where they took up a Homestead in the remote backwoods of what is now the Sunshine Coast. It was in this wilderness, more than 8 km from the nearest road, that the family toiled for five years to build a small home from hand-hewn timber and develop a productive farm. It was through this humble beginning that an intense love of family, an unshakable sense of duty, and a primal connection to the vast outdoors were thoroughly ingrained in Michael.

At the age of six years Michael's family moved from the backwoods homestead to North Vancouver where he attended elementary school and welcomed his younger sister Paula to the family. Some years later the family moved to West Vancouver where Michael attended high school. Michael was a bright and conscientious student who supplemented his studies playing rugby and boxing, and fought fires for the Forest Service when called upon to do so.

In May of 1941 the foul winds of the second great war proved an affront to Michael's morality and tugged at his sense of

duty, compelling him to volunteer for the RCAF just days after his 18th birthday. Upon completion of his flight training in Canada, graduating 3rd in his class, he received the commissioned rank of Pilot Officer. Michael served five years in the RCAF, including time stationed overseas in the British Isles, Africa, and India. In 1946 Michael was Honourably Released from the RCAF with the rank of Flight Lieutenant, and a lifelong passion for flying.

Soon after his return from the war Michael joined the Vancouver office of Paramount Films Distribution Company. Here, his keen business acumen and well-honed leadership skills propelled Michael to achieve numerous managerial appointments culminating in his promotion to President and General Manager of the company based in Toronto, Ontario. During this period Michael also served for 2-years as President of the Canadian Motion Picture Distributor's Association. Michael's penchant for the pursuit of excellence and opportunity led him to move his family to the United States in 1969 where he accepted a Sr. Vice Presidency at Paramount Films' parent corporation in New York City.

Executive life in New York City proved objectionable for Michael over the ensuing months and he yearned for Canada and home. Michael's family did not thrive in their new home either, and so following an interactive family meeting called specifically to explore these circumstances Michael made the extraordinary decision to resign his position and return with the family to southern Ontario in 1970. Michael's impeccable professional credentials and his expert understanding of the motion picture business led to more opportunity to further his career in Canada and soon Michael was appointed President of Astral Films where he served in that capacity until his retirement from the industry in 1981. He was also awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Medal for his devoted service to the Canadian motion picture arts.

In his family and leisure time Michael pursued several pastimes for which he had a strong affinity. One of these was Michael's passion for flying. His private pilot's License qualified him to fly both single and multi-engine aircraft, and he did so often. His personal aircraft was a single-engine Cessna 185 on Amphibian floats, and with it Michael could land in and take off from little more than a duck pond. Michael loved to share this passion with others and routinely flew family and friends into remote lake country in northern Ontario for hunting and fishing adventures, or just for the joy of it. On several occasions Michael flew his precious family from Toronto over vast expanses of land and ocean to Jamaica and the Bahamas in a borrowed twin-engine plane, doing so with the confidence and courage of a veteran flier.

Michael's humble beginnings in Canada left on him an indelible love for the land, and a compassion for the essential animals that enrich life on it. In 1977 Michael began to pursue his dream of owning and operating a small ranch when he and his wife Joanne purchased 32 acres of mixed pastureland with a farmhouse northwest of Georgetown, Ontario. There they built a barn and paddocks and created the High Cedars Quarter Horse Ranch. Here Michael and his sons actively worked the ranch to breed, raise, and train champion Quarter Horses for sale. Michael pursued his ranching aspirations further upon his retirement in 1981 when he moved the family to a much larger farm at Nanoose Bay on Vancouver Island. There Michael continued to raise Quarter Horses and added 30 Hereford cattle to his operation where he personally attended to chores such as calving, branding, and any number of unpleasant necessities associated with livestock husbandry. A dream come true for Michael. Family and duty called on Michael again in 1989 when an emerging need in the family led him to move the family to a home in Victoria where Michael and Joanne have resided ever since. Always looking to contribute, once in Victoria, he joined the board of his son's school and as chair of the building committee oversaw the construction of three new

buildings: a middle school, gymnasium and science facility.

Second only to family, Michael had no greater passion than that he had for his hunting dogs. Throughout his adult life Michael owned, trained, and hunted with many dogs and breeds. Michael was an accomplished Retriever trainer and won many ribbons and trophies running his dogs at field trials across Canada. Michael served as President of the Ontario Field Trial Club and as an Official Judge at the 1962 Canadian National Retriever Championship in Saskatoon.

Michael continued to train and hunt with his dogs while living in Victoria and from this activity a great friendship evolved with John Costello, another avid dog trainer and hunter. The pair of them enjoyed many fulfilling adventures hunting with their dogs throughout western Canada each year until 2014. Michael won his last Field Trial ribbons as recently as 2010, and he was elevated to Honorary Lifetime Member of the Vancouver Island Retriever Club of Canada in 2021.

No accounting of Michael's extraordinary life could be considered complete without recognition of the great love Michael felt for Joanne Stevenson, his wife of 48-years, and her contribution to Michael's life. Michael often remarked that Joanne was the kindest, most beautiful person he had ever met, and that she brought him love and peace-of-mind he had never known previously. Michael took strength and comfort from Joanne's unyielding love and support through the years, and she cared for him tenderly until the day he passed away.

Michael often expressed both pleasure and pride to have lived to see Canada become among the finest and most respected nations in the world, though he also expressed concern for the future of our society more recently. Michael will be sorely missed by surviving family members and friends alike for his expansive wisdom, his quick-witted humor, and for his

unassailable morality. Canada has never produced



Michael is survived by his wife Joanne, sister Paula, daughters Lynda and Louise, sons John, Matt (Stephanie), David (Rita) and Tim (Silvia), and numerous grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

A Celebration of Life and Inurnment will take place on Monday afternoon, October 6th, 2025 at the National Beechwood Military Cemetery, 280 Beechwood Avenue, Ottawa.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the [Marshall-Stevenson Wildlife Sanctuary Fund](#).

The family would especially like to thank Dr. Peter Meyer and Dr. Jay Aiken for their care and support over these many years.

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

McCall Gardens

www.mccallgardens.com