Rena O’Hara

Rena Yvonne O’Hara, age 97, of Victoria, British Columbia, wrapped up her earthly chapter on May 4, 2025, having spent nearly a century proving that quiet strength, sharp wit, and a good cup of tea can get you through just about anything.

Born on November 20, 1927, in Victoria, Rena was a homegrown West Coaster with a brief but memorable prairie detour. In 1952 she moved to the Matador Coop Farm near Kyle, Saskatchewan and spent the next 14 years raising a small army of children – juggling chores and chaos with nothing but calm competence. In the deep freeze of a Saskatchewan winter, she coined her now famous phrase, **“I was *not programmed* for this.”** And yet she made it work, with grace, grit, and a sense of humour so dry it could rival the prairie dust. Eventually, Rena returned to Victoria, where she reclaimed her coastal serenity, grew flourishing flower gardens, and perfected her subtle, eyebrow-lifting brand of humor.

Rena was a woman of quiet strength, strong faith, sharper wit than she let on, and a serious weakness for a good-looking flower bed. Her sense of humour was subtle, dry, and just spicy enough to keep you on your toes—especially if you thought you were going to win an argument. (Spoiler alert: you weren’t.) When asked how she was, her answer was always classic Rena:
“Adequate.” Not great. Not bad. Adequate. Which, coming from Rena, basically meant “Thriving, but don’t fuss.”

She is survived by her six children: Robert J. O’Hara, Yvonne Dawe, Paul O’Hara, Patsy Gavars, Earl O’Hara, and Ken O’Hara—plus their spouses, a battalion of grandkids, great-grandkids, great-great-grandkids (yes, she lived long enough to be her own family tree), and her two legendary Sisters-in-Law, *both* named Shirley Pynn. Coincidence? We think not. A sitcom? Probably.

She was predeceased by her husband, Robert L. O'Hara (who likely had a pot of tea ready for her on arrival); her sons Roy and Garry (undoubtedly waiting with hugs and hilarious commentary); her parents; and all her siblings—many of whom are no doubt delighted to have her back in the celestial kitchen, politely declining to learn how anything works "in the cloud."

An abbreviated Catholic Service will be held in the Sequoia Centre at McCall Gardens, 4665 Falaise Drive, Victoria on Monday, May 12, 2025 at 10:00am. Burial immediately follows at Royal Oak Burial Park where she will rejoin her husband. And then reception to follow back at McCall Gardens. Services are open to all who knew her, loved her, or just want to hear stories about the woman who could sum up 97 years with a single dry adjective.

In lieu of flowers (although she'd never turn her nose up at a nice rose), donations can be made to the Victoria Hospice Society or the BC Cancer Foundation two causes she held dear, right after family, friends, and freshly bloomed dahlias.

Rena will be missed fiercely, remembered fondly, and quoted frequently—especially when someone needs reminding that laughter, like gardens, grows best when tended with love and maybe a little sass. She taught us to face life's absurdities with faith, humor, and honesty. And whether she was standing in a blizzard on a Saskatchewan farm or politely tolerating a chaotic family dinner, she reminded us:

"I was not programmed for this."

But she showed up anyway—and she made it look effortless.

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

McCall Gardens
www.mccallgardens.com

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