Sylvia Doreen Fair

After a rich and fulfilling 96 years and facing an inevitable decline from Lymphoma, Sylvia left this world on her own terms with the help of the Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) team at Royal Jubilee Hospital in Victoria, BC on Sept 12 with her three sons at her side.

Born and raised in Calgary, daughter of Morris Shapiro and Bessie (nee Shumiatcher), Sylvia was the middle child of three. She enjoyed growing up in a musical family with a multitude of aunts, uncles, and cousins, attending huge gatherings where the kids were encouraged to perform.

In the 1940s Sylvia earned a BA in Sociology from University of Toronto, performed in lead roles in musicals at Hart House and Balfour Manor Camp, Gravenhurst, studied opera performance at the Royal Conservatory of Music and met her first husband Jack Grant (married June 21, 1948).

Having won a national CBC talent competition, she launched her career as a mezzo soprano with the Canadian Opera Company using her then married name Sylvia Grant. She played lead roles with the Canadian, New York and Houston opera companies and performed on radio and TV.

Sylvia and Jack had three sons Jordan (1953), Peter (1955), and Jeremy (1960). They recall listening with childlike dismay to their mother’s disciplined, daily practice of scales, and also their thrill in watching her perform and gaining backstage access.

After 15 years of juggling motherhood with an international singing career Sylvia retired. Having parted ways with Jack, she obtained a



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teaching certification and a position at Derrydown Public School in North York. She was a beloved teacher who volunteered to mentor teens with disabilities. Despite parenting solo, she managed to occupy the boys, attend summer courses in art history, travel to Italy to study renaissance artists, and later became a docent at the Stratford Art Gallery.

Sylvia gave her sons space to pursue their unique passions whether it was waterskiing, hockey, or motorcycling. In 1973 Peter invited her to watch him and his buddy David Fair race motocross. David invited his dad, Bob Fair who was also divorced. There was a spark, they started dating, and soon after Jordan, who was working for the summer in BC got a call from his mom to say she was getting married. His response: “congratulations!…who to?”

Bob and Syl’s August 7th, 1974 wedding at the Perth County Courthouse in Stratford sparked a magical journey. When Sylvia and Jeremy moved to Bob’s nearby farm, her three sons and Bob’s four kids formed lifelong bonds. With revolving

occupants, the farm felt like a hippie haven complete with music, art, motorcycle and horseback riding and food!

Bob was an avid competitive golfer having in his youth won the Ontario Junior Amateur championship in 1947 along with qualifying to play in the Canadian Open at 17 years of age. In 1982 they decided to move to Victoria BC for the year-round golf and started Tiger Golf, a small home-based golf equipment and supplies distribution business. In 1984, Bob secured Canadian distribution rights for a then little-known niche-market golf equipment brand – Callaway.

Callaway Golf rapidly grew into a leading global golf brand and Tiger Golf became a significant employer in Victoria assembling custom clubs and shipping large volumes of equipment across Canada. Bob derived immense satisfaction in managing a fast-growing business and mentoring his employees. In 1999 the Callaway Golf parent company bought out Tiger Golf and within 12 months the couple retired.

They combined international travel with enjoying life in Victoria, playing golf and bridge at the Victoria GC. Sylvia was always a caring mother and grandmother. She was an intent listener, a succinct and savvy purveyor of wisdom and support, and a curious life-long learner. She loved art, books, theatre, Nanaimo bars, gardens, travel and especially her homes in Oak Bay and Tucson, Arizona. Her living room was a warm and welcoming gathering place for family and friends.

Sylvia was a loving wife to Bob during his long illness, but tragically due to the COVID19 lockdown, could not be by his side when he passed in April 2020. Sylvia spent her last four years at Parkwood Place Senior Residence. She enjoyed playing bridge and Scrabble, and keeping on top of family milestones, worldwide news and Canadian politics. For someone who ostensibly shied away from new technology, she became quite adept at email, ‘surfing the web’, texting from her cell phone and making video calls. She was our matriarch and our rock,

and will be missed fiercely.

In addition to her brother Larry, Syl is loved and remembered by her sons: Jordan (Meg) of Toronto, Peter (Terrie) of Victoria, and Jeremy (Sheila) Grant of Guelph, Ont.; stepchildren Robert (Barbie), Michael (Nanci), David (Susan) Fair and Mary (Dennis) Des Chene; nine grandchildren: Gabriel (Maritte), Alicia (Jake), Elly & Isaac (Amber) Grant; Hilary (Joel), Stephanie (Zixi), Nicole & Patrick (Ashley) Fair and Sarah Gibb; and six great-grandchildren: Julian & Kira Fair Wang, Sydney & Oliver Levinson, and Maizie & Nora Hartog-Grant.

We all benefited from her wisdom, guidance, and clarity…

Special thanks are owing to Coral Gomez, who provided personal care and support and much more: first to Syl's sister Judy before her passing, then to Bob and Syl in their home, and finally to Syl at Parkwood Place. The care she gave Sylvia, particularly through the last months of her life went far beyond what could be expected – simply extraordinary.

Also, we extend our thanks to Judy's daughter, Sylvia's niece, Sydney Kalef who was a devoted helper and confidant for many years in Victoria; to Teresa Wong for her friendship and tech support for many years, and to the staff and Sylvia's new friends at Parkwood Place for making her feel so at home.

Finally, thanks to the competent and compassionate staff of the 4th floor N wing of the Royal Jubilee. Especially nurses Layton, Toni & Kirsten, physiotherapist Loraine and Doctors Banman, Duffels and Rutherford who kept Sylvia comfortable yet lucid and facilitated her journey toward release; and to Sylvia's long-time family physician Dr. Kachan.

A joint celebration of Sylvia and Bob's life is planned for the Victoria Golf Club on October 5th, 1:00 to 4:00 pm.

Donations may be made in memory of Sylvia to the Canadian

Opera Company https://www.coc.ca/, the Victoria Hospice https://victoriahospice.org/, Jewish Family Services of Vancouver Island https://jfsvi.ca/ or the charity of your choice.

Condolences may be offered to the family below.

McCall Gardens
www.mccallgardens.com