Valerie Jean Bailey (nee Anderson)

Bailey – Valerie Jean (nee Anderson) went to be with the Lord on June 2, 2009. Val is survived by her devoted husband of almost 56 years, Bill, and her four children and their spouses: Alan and Lori, Cam and Gelaine, Paul and Heather and Carol and Rod. Val had eleven much-loved grandchildren and 2 new darling great grandchildren: Mark (Hiro), Stefani (Scott), Natali, Mackenzie, Mitchell, Nicole, Ben, Anna, Marshall, Julia and Madeline, and Mark and Hiro's little girls, Aika and baby Rio. Val is also survived by her only sibling and his wife of 65 years, William and Roberta Anderson of Edmonton, AB, their sons, Robert Anderson of Edson and Richard Anderson of Victoria, and Robert's and Richard's children and grandchildren.

Val was born in Fernie, BC on January 16, 1931 to Cecil Brebner and Sadie Isabella (Clapp) Anderson. She lived as a young child in Fernie, with her idolized and much loved Brother Bill, but Bill was ten years older than Val and went into the Navy for WW2 when Val was still in primary school. She missed him greatly and did not enjoy being the only child in the household. Her father's career took them to Medicine Hat and Lethbridge during Val's later school years. She found this difficult, and she was determined that she would settle in one place with her own family someday and never move again. She was eventually able to do that in Victoria, a place she loved completely. Val was fortunate that her father had a good job with McDonalds Consolidated throughout the Depression and war years, and the family was able and willing to send Val to university at a time when most girls did not further their education. Cecil's parents had both been highly educated people in Scotland, the Headmistress and Headmaster of schools, and Sadie was a nurse trained at Kootenay Lake Hospital, so education was very important in the family. Val

had a great talent for music, in both piano and voice, and achieved the Silver Medal on her Royal Conservatory of Music Grade 10 voice examination, with the highest mark in Western Canada. She pursued a music education degree at the University of Alberta and had many wonderful times with her women's fraternity sisters in Delta Gamma and her friends in Pembina Hall. It seems she was popular; she claimed to her children that she was never without a date for a Saturday night while at U of A.

Val met Bill at U of A, where he was studying Engineering and playing trombone. She was thrilled to marry him in Lethbridge in 1953, and they settled in Edmonton. She had never been part of a large family before, and the eight boisterous Bailey siblings, all of them musical, with assorted spouses and offspring, opened up a whole new world of family party fun that Val enjoyed immensely over the years. Marriage meant the start of a new journey in the kitchen, too; Val had never been taught to cook, and Bill's mother and five sisters were hard acts to follow regardless. Bill had no idea before the wedding that there was a woman alive who could not cook, which lead to some initial strife as Bill couldn't cook either, but after a few false starts with undercooked potatoes, Val soon mastered the meal preparation tasks. It must be noted as well that Bill developed into a fine kitchen assistant, specializing in Saturday morning pancakes, and he helped out in many ways. Val was wise enough to know that you didn't have to be a master chef to make a few good, tasty meals. She found recipes she enjoyed and she provided very well for her family's culinary needs, but she always enjoyed cleaning the house more than spending time in the kitchen. Val never took much to baking, but she sure made an excellent pie crust. Though the pies weren't numerous, they certainly were good. Val felt that she put so much time and effort into these pies that it was only right that they not disappear too fast, so she would limit the speed at which a piece could be eaten. The same held true for all of the desserts she laboured over; if it took her an hour to make it, it would take you close to an hour to eat it. Bite

for bite with her, she'd say.
Val started her teaching career in Edmonton at Spruce Avenue School, teaching music and English. She also did a weekly radio program for the CBC called Listen and Sing, which was used in classrooms throughout Alberta. Teachers who had no talent for music would turn on the classroom radio, and magically, Val Bailey, with her little ten year old sidekick Reg, would teach all the children to sing. She was never a teacher to let a situation get the better of her; when asked to teach girls Phys Ed at Spruce Ave, she locked herself in the gym regularly after school and practiced shooting basketballs until she could sink them like a pro, one after another. When challenged by a young, duck-tailed, leather jacket-clad Grade 9 student, the legendary Lee Falconberg, Val gave him a what-for lecture that reverberated through the school's heating chambers into several other classrooms, marched into her principal's office and declared that either Lee went, or she went. The principal, Mr. Beckwith, subsequently explained to the boy that he really had to choose Mrs. Bailey over Lee, as Mrs. Bailey was doing a very good job at the school, while Lee really wasn't. A semester spent on the slaughter floor at Burn's convinced the boy that school was the place for him, and he later thanked Val for standing up to him and straightening him out. Val was always a live wire, determined, stubborn, eager, and feisty; she had a bright and immediate smile, was quick to laugh, and laughed a lot. Val had boundless energy and a brisk pace. She demanded genuine effort and excellent results from her students, and she was a disciplinarian extraordinaire. Her organizational skills were such that she could organize anything or anyone into a masterpiece of perfection; she truly would have been able to herd cats. She always lamented that she had the emotional temperament, the freckles and the fair skin of the redhead but no red hair to go with them. Above all other physical attributes, Val would have loved to have thick, red hair and she had great admiration for that hair when she saw it on others, especially on Roberta.

Eventually, Bill and Val became the proud parents of Alan and then Cam in Edmonton. Val took a temporary retirement from teaching and they all moved to Berkeley for Bill to complete his Masters in Sanitary Engineering. The California climate impressed Val and she realized that summers didn't have to be oppressively hot and winters unbearably cold. So, Bill and Val decided to look into a move to Victoria, which seemed to be the ideal location for Bill's career and a California-style climate. Paul had been born in Berkeley, and long-awaited daughter Carol FINALLY came along during their brief stint back in Edmonton. No denim of any kind would be permitted to darken the closet of Val's Girl for many years. With the two younger children, Val boarded the train and headed to the coast. A brief stay in a rental home allowed Val and Bill to build their new dream home at 2044 Frederick Norris Road, and Val got her wish to settle and never move again. She was happy to be at home with the children and focus on being a wife, mother and homemaker for a while. She kept a spotless house, pretty much spotless children, and provided accommodation and food for a university boarder every year as well. Her first boarder, Elaine Clarke, had moved in during 1957 as a favour to Brother Bill and his friend Raymond Clarke, but the tradition continued forever more, and Val and Bill eventually hosted a total of 57 boarders and additional assorted odds and sods until 2007, with many of whom they stayed closely in touch. Val ran a very tight household ship, an iron fist in a velvet glove, with scheduled piano practice for the children back to back at 7:30 and 8:00 am and rooms clean and beds made before breakfast was served. Everything had a place, and everything was in its place. Her closets were shining examples of beautifully presented organization, with perfectly matched, stacked and labelled boxes she had procured from shoe and stationary stores, holding everything that could ever be needed, including boxes labelled, "Shower Gifts for Baby Boy" and a general storage shoe box labelled, "Chair Tacks, Sink Washers and Night Lights." Just as when she had been teaching, she was confident and capable providing the discipline

required for her boys, and sometimes, her girl. She was never one to say “Just wait till your father gets home!” Any punishment (consequence?) that was required for noted infractions was duly meted out in a timely manner and was never left for Bill to handle. Val let the boys have all their wild adventures in the woods behind the house and beyond, but watch out if there was misbehaviour, or, worse yet, blood on Paul resulting from injuries caused by some questionable activity the older boys had dreamed up. She would be on the warpath. There were Saturday morning Job Lists for the children, and everyone did beautiful work, ready for Val’s inspection. The boys could clean a toilet with the best of them. There were four toilets and four children – perfectly planned. All four children took a variety of music lessons and Val was on the road in the reliable Rambler, driving to one lesson and then to the next. Hockey was pretty much handled by Bill, but Val was a vocal supporter in the stands when the boys played and she felt terrible about Paul the Goalie facing all those pucks, sharply directed toward his accident prone little head.

Val was a master communicator and a superb writer. She was an avid reader, and would lose herself entirely into a book when she read. She apparently was unable to hear or acknowledge Bill when she was so engrossed, which he found a bit annoying. Bill, not being a reading type until much later in life, felt that since there was so much to do about the place, perhaps she had already read all the books that possibly needed to be read in her lifetime, and that Nevil Shute fellow had written all he was capable of writing years ago and the rest of his writing was by now surely drivel. Bill never did manage to convince her of any of these ideas. All meals were eaten at the kitchen table within easy reach of her indispensible reference books: Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations, the Oxford Thesaurus, the Oxford Dictionary, and Webster’s Synonyms, Antonyms and Homonyms. The Medical Dictionary also came out frequently, often to diagnose Paul’s injuries but not always. She loved the English language, and she loved it to be spoken

and written properly. She always kept in touch with people through letters, and wrote constantly. She wrote to close friends and scattered family, to the Editor of the local papers about topics which were near to her heart, including music education in the schools, and she often wrote to major corporations with suggestions and comments. In one particular case, she felt Kentucky Fried Chicken was setting a poor linguistic example with their statement “We do Chicken Right” and felt that a more acceptable slogan would be “We do Chicken Correctly.” The Kentucky Fried Chicken Corporation never did respond to that letter, but Val used to receive many polite responses back from most letters she wrote. In fact, she wrote to the Queen Mother at Glamis Castle in Scotland. She explained Granny Helene Anderson’s friendship with the Queen Mother’s nanny, when Cecil had been child in Lintrathen, and indicated that Val and Bill were coming to Lintrathen for a visit. Next thing you knew, Val received a letter back from the Queen Mother’s secretary, inviting them to have a private viewing of the Castle and tea with Lady Mary, the permanent family resident of the castle. Val’s letter writing often had many interesting outcomes.

Val went back to teaching part time when the kids were all in school, and spent nineteen exceedingly happy years at Richmond. She taught music to students in grades three through seven, although a few years saw her with the kindergarten students, too, just to keep her on her toes. They made her laugh a great deal but her heart was with the older kids, and she made fine musicians of most of them. Her choirs were outstanding in every way, and the complicated productions that she could put together, with help from the other teachers, were a testament to both her musical skills and her organizational prowess. She could juggle a seemingly endless number of balls in the air, and concert nights always came off without much of a hitch that anyone but Val would notice. “The Show Must Go On” was indeed her motto, and she gave Richmond students and parents many years of music excellence.

During this time, she also ran the children’s junior choir at

St. Aiden’s church. This choir came to be known as the Songsters, and working with all those children over the many years she directed Songsters was very rewarding for Val. Songsters provided Val with a way to share her faith and beliefs with the children, while also whipping them up into shape as an unbelievably good children’s choir. She taught them about Jesus and the Bible, about friendship, about how to stand tall and breathe from their diaphram to make the most beautiful vowel sounds ever, and, of course, about good behaviour.

When Alan was in high school, he started attending Young Life, and Val and Bill came to be very involved in the organization as adult volunteers. Val joined the local committee and brought all of her talents to share for over twenty years. She worked tirelessly, organized endlessly, and found and nurtured wonderful friendships within a vibrant Christian community. Val was also very involved with the church throughout her life, and was very excited when she and Bill, in later years, participated in the start up of a new congregation, Faith Congregational Church, eventually to be called Pipeline Church when it seemed they would build a new building on Pipeline Road. This newer, small church kept Val very involved, as there were many jobs to do and lots of music to be made. She had very close relationships with her fellow church members and valued them greatly. She kept up her commitment to Young Life and church activities until she finally was no longer able to do so because of Alzheimers.

Val will be greatly missed by friends and family, although she had slipped away from most people in the past few years as Alzheimers took its toll. In typical Val fashion, she fought a hard battle with the disease, and didn’t give up. She was determined to help other people who had Alzheimers by participating in research studies through UBC, and she and Bill travelled back and forth to UBC so Val could be part of Dr. Feldman’s study. She lived with the disease for much longer than most patients do, which probably reflects her strong will and her general good health otherwise, as well as

the excellent care she received. She always took good care of her self, ate well, and got lots of exercise with her beloved Basil. It’s a whimsical thought, but surely Basil and Val are striding happily together again, around the blocks of Heaven! Never was there a more devoted pair. Many thanks to all the staff at the Pavilion who cared so kindly for Val over the past five years. A celebration of Val’s life will be held at Emmanuel Baptist Church on Thursday, July 2 at 2:00 pm. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Kiwanis Pavilion Society.

Postscript

When going through some old papers, Cam found some cue cards with a little speech Mom had written on them. We believe that it would have been written for Lillian Hagan’s memorial service. Lillian and Bernie Hagan were parents of a close friend of Val’s, Norma Hagan, and they were renowned for their senses of humour, as was the entire Bailey family. Lillian lived to a very old age, and was healthy, spry and funny all the way through. It would have been a pleasant time in reminiscence at her service. We felt this little snippet of Mom’s writing caught a classic soundbite from her, which illuminates her proper sense of decorum, Dad and Uncle Bob’s joy in having fun together, always, and Mom’s generous sense of humour in the telling:

“Here’s a Hagan memory that my husband can’t, or won’t, remember. On the eve of our wedding, Bill and Brother Bob came to Lethbridge, and were kindly hosted by Lillian and Bernie. They were to join us at Mom and Dad’s house at 7:30 for a family gathering. Time went by, and more time went by. My mom was agitated and I was even more so.

Finally, much later than 7:30, we phoned over to Hagans. The boys were having so much fun with Bernie and Lillian, cracking one joke after another, that they had become unaware of the time and of the fact they were absent from the cup of tea date over at our house. Not a great way to start our marriage from

my perspective, but Bill and Bob thought it was the highlight of the weekend.”

We love you forever, Mom.