

Ruth Drysdale

SEPTEMBER 4, 2017

Ruth Drysdale, “Renaissance woman:” Beloved nurse, journalist, artist, musician, athlete, adventurer, and counselor; devoted wife, mother and friend to many, quietly took her last breath Mon. Sept. 4, 2017, with family, in her 99th year. She was loving, kind, and funny, and she twinkled about reuniting with husband Rod in the next realm.



She was born Hilda Ruth Fryer in Virden, Man., to Dr. I.O. Fryer and teacher Laura Wallace Fryer, and brother Avard. She was taught by her mother to stand up for herself, so at age 5, when excluded by the neighbourhood boys, she proudly punched a boy in the face to prove she could meet their standards....and she was in! From then on, she lived a life with determination and without intimidation, and with many self-learned skills! She played the harmonica with gusto from ages 3 to 98, and drew cartoons from childhood to her 90's.

She was extremely bright, graduating early from Gordon Bell High School in Winnipeg. She played violin in the Winnipeg Youth Orchestra on CBC radio; played on a hockey team; skied; golfed; and canoed. She attended a secretarial school, and won a trophy for speed typing, until old enough for entry to United College. Adventurous, she took a train to Vancouver, and entered VGH School of Nursing, graduating in 1944. She was known for humorous cartoons depicting war-era nursing. She made housecalls in Chinatown by bike. On a shift in Heather Pavilion, her colleague was stabbed by an addict, and Ruth was left to manage an

open ward of patients, alone at night, while the assailant was still on the run.

After graduating, she and a girlfriend cycled on heavy 1-speed bikes up the unpaved and steep Fraser Canyon “highway,” sleeping under tables and at a gas station. She rode horses at a dude ranch. She helped deliver babies in Nelson and Vernon, before returning to Winnipeg for a 2-yr Diploma in Public Health Nursing.

In 1949, she married Rod Drysdale, a Winnipeg engineer, embarking on a 66-yr adventurous partnership. They moved to Kingston, where she worked as a V.O.N. nurse, and on to ThunderBay, Hamilton, and Toronto, where Rod worked on the Avro Arrow. At home with children Elaine and Stephen, Ruth began writing, and read her humorous story on CBC’s TransCanada Matinee, at a time when speaking across the nation was really impressive! They won a boat, hand-built a cottage, and waterskied.

In 1960, after they returned to Winnipeg, she joined the Can. Authors’ Assoc., and sold over 50 human-interest articles, mainly to The Winnipeg Free Press and Calgary Herald. She photographed forts, mills, and nylon factories, and wrote of aboriginal student re-integration, CNIB audiobooks, fertilizer plants, and singing in nursing homes. Her fictional short stories were published, and she placed 2nd in competition. Life included skiing, square-dancing, and Sunday School teaching. As a nurse, she interviewed mothers for hospital genetic research.

In 1966, the family moved to Calgary, building a new house on barren land, and Ruth took Psychology courses at U of Calgary, alongside students half her age. She nursed on psychiatric wards at Foothills Hospital, and later worked for Alberta Mental Health visiting psychiatric outpatients. Job expectations included visiting post-psychotic murderers in their homes alone, and she hoped they were taking their medications! To write about building the Calgary Husky Tower, the tallest structure of its type in North America in 1968, she walked on open-air planks 626 ft. high, wearing a hard hat and using safety ropes to take photographs.

She was a terrific mother, supporting science fair projects by picking up animal organs at meat-packing plants, and allowing her kitchen for use to boil down remains of a coyote. She baked cupcakes for choirs, sewed badges, and attended countless music competitions, Stampede shows, and hockey rinks. There were educational and exciting road trips, hikes in the mountains, ski trips, and boating. She sewed dresses and hats, and created cartoon character cakes. Of most importance, she was kind, intuitively understood us, and helped us feel that our interests and friends were important, no matter our age. She spoke out when necessary, as a strong role-model. We learned that challenges were character-building; she encouraged spiritual reading and philosophical discussions to broaden our perspectives.

In 1976 they moved to South Surrey, for 39 yrs of rural happiness. Ruth worked at Burnaby Mental Health inpatient ward, where she amused patients and staff by playing audiotapes of her singing poodle over the sound system! She provided nursing assessments in Long Term Care in the community. At her retirement, the restaurant's belly dancer whisked her onto the floor, and she proudly received money for her belly dancing! After "retiring" she typed for a pain clinic.

Athletic, she excelled in golf, winning trophies. She skied in her late 60's, cycled in her 80's, swam in the lake in her 90's, and gardened. The annual Croquet Tournament at the house was a highlight with friends for 25 yrs.

With artistic talent shown in childhood in sketches, she later created impressive oil paintings of vistas and portraits. She drew "pen and ink" sketches, printed them for Christmas cards and sent them to 120 friends annually for 40 yrs.

Music was essential. She played nightly piano serenades for years, and later played the organ daily. She taught herself to play the accordion, guitar, and recorder. Her harmonica playing always provided comic relief in any situation, including her rendition of "Nearer my God to Thee," on a bus trip on a narrow road

in the Alps. She sang in choruses throughout her life, and loved singing with the Kent Street Choristers for over 25 yrs, to age 96.

She was loyal and reached out to others. She was up for tenting, mini-golf, and school events with grandchildren. There were trips to see family at the Shuswap and Alberta; cruises, concerts, and fun-filled card games with family and friends. She celebrated every occasion in the year and everybody's triumph! She was a welcoming and relaxed hostess who always made efforts to decorate her table seasonally and to create an atmosphere of warmth, humour, acceptance, and graciousness, with interesting discussions and background music. She lived by the phrase "When in doubt, do the friendliest thing," and she maintained friendships across time and space.

A lifelong learner, she stayed informed, and used her computer at 98. She believed that one had to be philosophical about life's challenges, a belief honed by her share of challenges and brushes with death. She did not give up. The "bionic woman", she was ready at age 98 to consider a 4th joint replacement. She stressed the importance of staying humble, yet standing up for oneself. Ruth and Rod looked for the humour in situations and laughed daily. They believed in "not quitting when the going gets rough," and for that, they reaped many blessings in every way.

She was predeceased by parents; brother Dr. Avarid Fryer; husband Rod (2015); and scores of friends who are likely celebrating her arrival "on the other side." She is greatly missed by daughter Elaine Drysdale and her son Peter Hunt; son Stephen (Fern) and their children Steven, Stacey, Angie and Micheal, and spouses; 8 great-grand-children; Rod's siblings Jim (Susan), Doug (Dale) Drysdale and Kathleen Rempel; many nephews and nieces; and special family friend Jean Robles whose caring support was greatly appreciated. The family wishes to express gratitude for the caring expertise of Drs. Teresa Tsang, Angela Nguan, and

Balakrishna; the staff at Amica Arbutus, VGH units LJB10 and 7, Evergreen nurses, and Windermere Care Centre; and to friends Jack and Lorrie Scott, Dorothy Nomann, and Bev Connolly.

Her Celebration of Life will be Sat. Oct. 14 at 2:30 at First United Church White Rock, 15385 Semiahmoo Ave, White Rock, BC. Donations in her honour would be appreciated for Vancouver General Hospital Dept. of Psychiatry at vghfoundation.ca/donate and state for Psychiatry. You are invited to leave a personal message of condolence for the family.

Messages of Condolence

I would like to express my sincere condolences for your loss of my Dear Aunt Ruth. I will never forget her bright smile and laugh.

— **Eric Rempel and Clara Reid**

Ruth was such a beautiful person. One of those who made the world a better place. Her kind friendly spirit will be missed by all who knew her. My condolences to her loving family. Til you meet again.

— **Susan Fryer**

Ruth was a truly wonderful neighbour and friend. She will be missed by all who had the privilege of knowing her and hearing her ready laugh.

— **Carol and Klaus Oehr**

We will all miss Aunt Ruth's welcoming smile, joyful laughter, humor, love and tender heart. We were all blessed to have had her in our life and even more blessed to call her family. She was a special aunt, sister-in-law, friend and role model. We always looked forward to her and Uncle Rod's visits to Manitoba. The world seems a little emptier without them. Her spirit was unlike any other, and her love of life shone through to all of us. Until we meet again. xo

— Robin Chammartin - Jim & Susan Drysdale - Rod Drysdale (nephew)



<https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/drysdale-ruth>

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