Evelyn Doreen O'Keefe



SEPTEMBER 14, 2025

Evelyn Doreen O’Keefe

June 24, 1939 – September 14, 2025

Our beloved mother, Doreen (Watson) O’Keefe (86), of Ocean Park, Surrey, B.C., passed at home of natural causes on September 14, 2025, surrounded by her loving family.

Born in Lethbridge, Doreen spent her early years in Alberta, the family moving with her father’s dental practice. She was schooled in FCJ Catholic schools, where she connected and remained very close to Reverend Mother Rita for many years after her schooling. As a young girl, mom loved hiking in Banff, and she joined the Airforce Cadets for a summer, mostly enjoying the dance socials.

Doreen’s initial idea of being a missionary after high school was forever put aside when while working for the bank in Calgary, where she met the anchor and love of her life, Gerry. After a year’s courtship, they were married and remained life partners for 62 years.

After their first years in Calgary, they moved with their four young children to Montreal, and then in 1973 was the final adventure to Ocean Park, South Surrey – their forever home. The family home was our mother’s haven and castle, where she created a secure, loving environment for her children & family. Doreen’s generosity, love, & kindness extended to everyone: always welcoming orphans to her table of delicious plenty and a stay in her home if a refuge was needed – and

there were many.

Over the years, in addition to her core passion of family, mom had many interests: cooking, reading, and three more passions of note: needlepoint, writing, and rehabilitating wild infant raccoons. Like her culinary skills, she mastered needlepoint to an art form. Mentored originally by her good friend, Rochelle Greenstone, with mom's eye for detail and perfection, she created many stitch-perfect & stunning pieces for family and friends. After Rochelle passed, mom took over & ran the shop, 'Rochelle's Needlecraft Boutique', in White Rock for several years, mostly to keep her friend's memory alive.

Doreen's writing took the form of many opinion letters published in 'The Peace Arch News'. Mother had a strong sense of social justice and animal welfare, and if she read of something that didn't sit well, she sharpened her pencil, researched, and wrote.

After the children moved from the family home, Doreen's need to nurture found a place with rehabilitating wild orphaned baby raccoons. She was one of the original rehabilitators working with 'Critter Care Wildlife Society' and spent many years nurturing annual sets of 'children' to live again in the wild. Family & friends even built a special home for her charges, affectionately called, 'The Coondominium'. Mom's love of wildlife extended beyond raccoons, and included any creature: four-footed, legless, winged, or gilled.

Right up until the end of her life and even when faced with challenging health issues, mom taught her family how to love, be helpful, be curious, and to always 'do the right thing'. She was gracious and polite until her last breath.

Doreen is survived by her four children: Colleen O'Keefe Podzun, Kathleen O'Keefe, Shannon (Frank) O'Keefe Mandarino, and Sean O'Keefe; her sister, Ariel Johnston; 12 loving grandchildren, and a great grandson. She is pre-deceased by

her son-in-law, Hans and most beloved husband, Gerry.

The center of our family and a much-loved mother, grandmother, mentor, and friend to all creatures great and small, mom is at peace and gone to be with her father and waltz with dad once again.

To remember Doreen, you might contribute to your favourite wildlife charity.

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