Judy Thomas

JANUARY 13, 2020

Judy Persson Thomas passed away peacefully in Calgary on Monday, January 13th at age 67, after an unexpected diagnosis of pancreatic cancer in December. At the time of her passing her favourite song was playing and she was surrounded by close family members holding her hands and speaking words of hope and love. She left this world very serenely and beautifully.

Judy was born on August 27, 1952 in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. She was the daughter of Ron Persson, a civil engineer for Parks Canada and Bessie Persson, a nurse. She had three siblings, brothers, Roy and Ken, and sister, Marian.

During Judy’s childhood her father’s job led to frequent moves for the family to locations in and around many of Canada's national parks. She lived in Waskesiu, Jasper, Lamont, Banff, Ottawa and Cornwall before settling down long-term in Calgary in 1967.

Judy attended William Aberhart, the same high school her future children would attend in Calgary, before graduating from the University of Calgary in 1973 with a Bachelor of Education (with distinction) degree with a major in Music. She followed this up with post-graduate studies at the University of Connecticut focusing on education for gifted children in 1979-80.

A passionate teacher, she worked for 34 years with the Calgary Board of Education, specializing in French, Music and education for gifted children. During her career she taught across Calgary, including stints at Maple Ridge, Jerry Potts,

Oakley Centre, McKay Road and Ranchlands schools. The latter part of her career was spent at Hillhurst school teaching in the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program. She also conducted workshops at Teachers Conventions in French and Music for Addison-Wesley and the Alberta Teachers' Association.

Judy married Steve Thomas in 1981 and gave birth to Christopher in 1982 and Anne in 1984. She was a loving and supportive mother to both kids, inspiring them to develop skills in music, French and athletics. She also encouraged them to pursue their own interests and offered unwavering support as they grew into individual adulthood. Both kids achieved a high degree of success at the local and provincial levels in debate, thanks in part to Judy's support and volunteering.

She was famous for her hospitality to her children's friends and always made the Thomas home a warm, welcoming and fun environment to grow up in. She was a kind and gracious mother-in-law when Christopher married Caroline Becker in 2008 and when Anne married Adrian Harding in 2010, warmly embracing Caro and Adrian as new members of the family.

Judy became a grandma four times over between 2009 and 2018 and was intensely devoted to Peyton (10), Edward (6), Bobby (6) and Allie (1). She eagerly provided regular childcare and loved to take her grandchildren on outings to the Calgary Zoo and Science Centre, as well as swimming, curling and bowling at the Calgary Winter Club. She was an enthusiastic supporter for her grandkids in all their sporting, musical and artistic endeavours.

Judy loved to travel and enjoyed annual summer vacations to Waskesiu Lake in Saskatchewan with her family, a tradition she enjoyed with her own parents and carried on by her children today. She also toured the world with Steve in their retirements, taking trips to Mexico, the Bahamas, Hawaii, South Africa, Namibia, Zambia, Botswana, New York City, Ecuador, Argentina, Chile, England, Greece, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, New Zealand, Portugal, Croatia, and Slovenia. Judy

took her first cruise to Alaska just last September and thought that could be something to do more of as she grew older. She was a kind-hearted, open-minded and inclusive woman who enjoyed visiting and learning about other cultures.

She was an avid and skilled curler at the Winter Club in a number of different leagues. While she always said curling is about the "wings and beer" she managed to win her share of league championships. She was a fierce competitor on the ice but a fun and friendly teammate or opponent off it. She also enjoyed swimming, hiking and cross-country skiing. She was a sports fan who loved watching curling, live or on TV and was a season ticket holder for the Calgary Cannons and the Stampeders.

Judy loved music, especially Beethoven. She was an accomplished musician and spent a number of years playing clarinet for the Calgary Concert Band. She also reluctantly played piano and guitar and was working on the harp. She supported many theatre companies in Calgary as a season ticket holder and enjoyed going to shows abroad, especially in New York and London. She loved to dance. She and Steve were usually among the first on the floor at dances and parties. They shared the joy of life which comes from not caring what others think.

Judy marveled at the beauty of nature, especially mountains, forests, lakes, stars and sunsets. She excelled at appreciating beauty in the moment. On many road trips with her family she would often call out “pretties,” a sign for others in the car to make note of and take in some natural beauty around them. In Waskesiu she rarely missed a sunset, watching through the trees at the multicoloured glow slowly descending over the lake.

Judy had a beautiful and loving Christian faith in which she found great strength and hope near the end of her life. She was active in music leadership at Hope Lutheran Church, where she directed voice and handbell choirs. Her warmth and hospitality extended outside the home, and she always made people feel welcome

and accepted whatever the environment.

The family thanks friends and relatives for the hundreds of messages, well-wishes, thoughts and prayers that Judy received from all over the world during her last month. She was truly able to see how much she was loved and how many lives she impacted during her time on earth. She was a wonderful and loving wife, mother, grandmother, and friend.

A memorial service will take place at Hope Lutheran Church in Calgary on January 25th at 1 pm.

Donations can be made in Judy's name to the Waskesiu Foundation (www.waskesiufoundation.ca), the Calgary Health Trust (www.calgaryhealthtrust.ca), the Canadian Mental Health Association (www.cmha.ca) or the charity of your choice.

Messages of Condolence

Anne and family, my sincere condolences to you all. My heart aches for you at this moment. I know your strength as a family will carry and support you in the days and weeks to come. Sending a big hug from Caitlin Bell as well.

— Trudy Schouten (Bell)

Dear Steve and family:

I am so sad to learn of Judy's passing. She was a talented and wonderful person, always smiling and welcoming to everyone. She will be missed by many. Thinking of you at this difficult time.

Cheryl Jackson

— Cheryl Jackson

May the peace of Christ find its way into your hearts during this difficult time.
I'll miss the wonderful conversations with Judy about kids (and grandkids), education and world travel - all amidst acupuncture needles and rubber dams. My most sincere condolences.
Dr. Dave Cichon

— Dave Cichon

We were shocked when we learned of Judy's diagnosis and now we are so saddened for your loss. Our contact was sporadic over the years but every encounter was seasoned by her warmth, good humour and intelligence. Her dedication to family and friends are a lasting legacy.

— Ian and Trish Neely

I am so so sorry...
Wishing you peace, courage and loving memories to last a lifetime.
Thinking of everyone connected to Judy, such a vibrant person, such a loss...and I think especially of Christopher and Anne.
Sending you positive, healing thoughts, Marlene Nelson from Ecole Banff Trail
Sadly, I am in Edmonton at a funeral on Saturday, otherwise I'd be with you.

— Marlene Nelson

To the Thomas Family,

Heartfelt condolences go out to all of you with the loss of beautiful Judy, a wonderful wife, mother, grandmother and friend. I was privileged to work with Judy at Hillhurst School as an Educational Assistant. Judy was always so welcoming and supportive of my work in her classroom when assisting students. While she commanded respect in her class, she also gave so freely of her time, energy and talent to all of the students.She was a remarkable woman who embodied generosity and kindness.

In Judy's retirement, I thoroughly enjoyed hearing about her travel adventures, and marvelled at her lovely photos. As I travel to Croatia and Slovenia this coming fall, I will be thinking of Judy, especially since she was the lady who inspired me to choose this locale as a travel destination!

Judy will be greatly missed. May her legacy of love, and all of the great memories of time spent together give you peace and comfort during this most difficult time.

Blessings,

Sheila Roy-Hankinson

— Sheila Roy-Hankinson

Dear Steve, Chris, and Anne’s families,

You have been in our thoughts and prayers since Steve shared the news of Judy’s diagnosis.

We are very sad to be so far away and unable to attend the service for Judy.

We will catch up with you when we return in February.

Sincerest sympathy,

Jan and Bill

— Jan and Bill Lockley

We have heard about Judy for many years from her wonderful daughter Anne. Last year we had the opportunity to meet and over the past couple of weeks - we have reflected on the conversations we had. Reading the write up and the tributes reminds us that we have all been fortunate to have known Judy. When so many people remember her with love and joy you know that she made a difference in the lives that she touched - what an incredible legacy. I know that this will be a sad time for many but, we should all take heart in everything that Judy accomplished. We are fortunate to be able to work and learn with Anne and we value and treasure this. We know that she reflects Judy and what she has instilled in her children, grandchildren and others and we would like to say thank-you. Amelia, Drew, Anita, Anneliese, Tiffany and Raphaelle - your IAP2 colleagues.

— Amelia Shaw

I am sorry that this is so late, I just found out 15 minutes ago. Judy was a special person, and I want to offer our condolences. I still remember, when on our honeymoon, we passed Judy and Steve coming out of a restaurant in Cancun. It turned out that you dined outside, and Kim had not brought a jacket, Judy literally took the jacket off her back, and gave it to Kim. Cancun set a record low for that date, on that day, something like 3 degrees, with howling wind, which blew over, our half full wine bottle. Judy had to walk home without a jacket, in the frigid weather, but she never hesitated for a second.
Bob and Kim Wilson

— Bob and Kim Wilson

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https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/thomas-judy

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