

Helen Deans Maxwell

OCTOBER 10, 1943 – NOVEMBER 22, 2021



Loved mother of Danielle Parla (Basel, Switzerland) and Nicole Seminiuk (Wellington, NZ) sister to Kirsty Maxwell and Sheilagh FitzGerald. Born in Gisborne, New Zealand, Helen was the cherished middle daughter of Dougal and Sheilagh Maxwell.

She met and married Canadian Larry Seminiuk in NZ and together with Danielle they embarked on the journey across the Pacific on board the P&O Liner Arcadia in 1971. For the rest of her life Helen talked about her wonder at the first sight

of a snowy Vancouver as they sailed beneath the Lions Gate bridge. Her arrival date in Canada lived on, incorporated in various codes!

Helen joined the Victoria School District #61, first at Colquitz as a Home Ec teacher. She later taught at Reynolds, Mount Douglas, Landsdowne and finally at Vic High. She became famous at various schools for organising events like a Christmas pancake breakfast and a perogies lunch for a 1000 students.

After gaining a master's degree at UVic she became a much sought after counsellor who worked tirelessly for the good of her students. The characteristics her colleagues fondly recall include: the perception and imagination she brought to the job; the trust she engendered in both students and staff; and her sense of style which endeared her to all. In addition to counselling within the school, she also spent a year working with the UVic counselling department.

At the time of her retirement she was the most senior teacher in the GVSD, having served for more than 41 years. If overtime were included it would probably be closer to 50 years - she was notorious for leaving school late in the evening and then only at the urging of the janitor!

In retirement she channeled her energies into tennis, cycling, walking, pickle ball, jewellery making and volunteering at the

Belfry. But most of all, she was an enthusiastic member of Cordova Bay 55+ where she took the lead organising luncheons for members.

The loss of those activities and the regular contacts with many friends due to the Covid shutdown was a bitter blow. In her final weeks and days she was much comforted by calls and visits from so many friends and colleagues.

Helen loved the house she bought on her own in Cordova Bay. That sea and mountain view and her faithful hummingbirds were her solace and comfort in the long lonely days of the Covid restrictions. She was fortunate to have kind neighbours in her small cul de sac who looked out for her so assiduously in the last few years.

Helen developed Type 1 diabetes in 1975 so her health needs remained complex throughout her life. She was fortunate to be cared for by two wonderful family physicians: Dr Herbert Domke and Dr Sundren Govender. In her final month she received conscientious care at Royal Jubilee Hospital. Sadly, at the end, she succumbed to heart and lung problems which followed recent chemotherapy.

In the new year, when we have more joy and energy than we can currently muster, we will organise a Celebration of Life to pay tribute to her style, generosity and achievements.

Friends, colleagues and former students who would like to be

invited to this event please provide an email address to: celebratehelen48@gmail.com All those who knew Helen and would like to make a final farewell are welcome if Covid restrictions allow.

To honour Helen and her life's work, her colleagues and family have created a bursary for students at Victoria High School. We humbly ask that you donate to this fund in lieu of flowers. Go to www.sd61.bc.ca; Click on 'Make a Donation' (blue box at the top); next, see 'Gift Info'; indicate donation amount , then 'Select Fund Destination' and, then Scroll to 'Helen Maxwell (Seminiuk) Memorial Bursary' (at the top) and click(select); Add to Cart. Tax receipts are instant. By cheque: send to Greater Victoria School Board, 556 Boleskine Rd, Victoria, V8Z 1E8. Note the name of the bursary clearly on the cheque. Ensure your name and mailing address are available for tax receipt.

Helen taught at MDSS 1980-1988 on Home Ec., Foods & Nutrition & Family Studies.