

Helen Backhouse

Helen Backhouse was born in Timmins, Ontario, to Percy Boyce and Lillian (Diack) Boyce, and grew up in nearby Schumacher. She died in Edmonton, Alberta, surrounded by family. She was predeceased by her husband John Backhouse in 2023, their son David in 1959, her parents Percy and Lillian, sister Peggy (Len) and brother Bob (Ruth). Left holding her in their hearts are her children Fiona (Michel), Frances (Mark) and Gary (Lauren); grandchildren Marc, Daniel, Jeanne-Marie, Colette, Max and Jake; great-grandchildren Wren, Amelia, Claire and Cordelia; and many other family members, notably Alan, Doug and Pat. She is also lovingly remembered by a wide circle of friends.

Helen's most cherished childhood memories included summers spent at the family cottage, Acorn Lodge. She completed high school at Albert College and worked at the YWCA for a few years, then set out with a friend to see the world. They started in England, where Helen got a job as a receptionist at Canada House in London. She changed course when she married John in 1956 and became a mother. In 1959, after the death of their first child, David, from cystic fibrosis, she returned to Canada with John and Fiona. The family grew with Frances and Gary arriving in the following years. Helen and John moved nearly a dozen times during their first 16 years of marriage, before settling at "1608" in Calgary in 1972, where they remained until their 2021 move to Sherwood Park. Helen always handled much of the logistics and created a stable home base for the family in each new place.

Helen was deeply involved in the community as a dedicated volunteer: organizer, doer, leader, mentor, teacher. She was an active member of the Lakeshore (Pointe-Claire, QC) & Calgary Unitarian congregations, served with distinction on the Canadian Unitarian Council board and was president of the Western Canada District. Her sixty years of Guiding contributions ranged from Brown Owl to Trainer and Calgary Area co-Commissioner with her best friend Helen Perry. She carried on her special Guiding friendships through the Trefoil Guild and Sisters' Camp. Helen also devoted much time to running the Alberta Family History Society library. She enjoyed sharing her passion for genealogy with fellow volunteers and family members.

We will truly miss Helen's laughter, attentive listening, genuine interest in our lives, family history stories and knowledge, book recommendations, wisdom, support, strength, curiosity, openness and unconditional love. We will honour her memory by following her example of how to live a good life.

Helen and her family appreciated the excellent care she received from the Grey Nuns Hospital staff during her brief illness. A celebration of life for both Helen and John will be held in Calgary this spring.

If desired, donations may be made to Girl Guides of Canada, Child Haven International, Cystic Fibrosis Canada or a charity of your choice.

Celebration of Life - July 27, 2024 - Calgary Unitarian Church 1703 1 St NW, Calgary