



Joan Hooper (nee Shaver) (1946)

On December 19, 1928, in Grande Prairie, Alberta, Joan was welcomed into the world by her parents Harry and Jessie (Mackay) Shaver and older sister Clare. She lived in that once-small town until 1944, when her mother's health issues prompted the family to move to Victoria. After finishing high school at Vic High, Joan attended Victoria College, then trained at the Royal Jubilee Hospital to become an RN, a dream of hers since she was 5 years old. She and her friend Gerri would often laugh about one of the highlights of her training: their girls' road trip to Seattle to watch Gerri's cousin, a coroner, perform an autopsy. (Other young women would have gone shopping.)

Joan had planned to travel the world upon completing her training, but a blind date with a young sailor named Ron Hooper altered those plans—temporarily. In 1952, they married after Ron returned safely from serving in the Korean War. Three years later, their first daughter, Leslie, was born; three years after that, daughter Tracey joined their family.

During the times Ron was away at sea, Joan masterfully handled all the responsibilities of being a single parent, and in so doing, set an example for her daughters of how to be strong, capable women. Joan also had a sharp intellect. At an early age, she became proficient in swearing in Gaelic, much to the chagrin of her mother, who was of Scottish ancestry. As an adult, Joan could solve any type of word puzzle (always in ink) and most murder mysteries within the first few minutes of the opening scene. But she was much more than an intellectual. Growing up, her summers were spent hiking along the Wapiti River, and she participated in every sport going in her town. Curling was a favourite (her claim to fame was clearing the house during a match [usually unintentionally]), and in later years, she armchair coached many televised bonspiels. She also became an unofficial armchair judge of "Dancing with the Stars", having won third prize in a ballroom dance competition with Ron early in their marriage: "You've got to watch the footwork", she'd advise.

Joan enjoyed a number of pastimes—gardening, birdwatching, jigsaw puzzles, embroidery, needlework, rug hooking—but sewing was probably her forté: Hallowe'en costumes, velvet Christmas dresses, hats, doll clothes, high school graduation dresses—you name it, she could make it. And although she didn't really like cooking, no one made a better apple pie (with whole cloves) or peanut butter and jam sandwich.

Joan was not particularly musical herself, but she liked various types of music—classical, swing, opera, and especially, the traditional music of the South Pacific. She was never one to cry easily, but her eyes would always well up when listening to Leslie singing in the choir.

The caring/giving nature that led Joan to become an RN continued throughout much of her life. After retiring from nursing, she provided respite care to families with children who had special needs, participated in PTA activities at Doncaster Elementary School during her daughters' early years there,

served as a Leader for the Explorers group at St. Aiden's United Church, became a chauffeur for numerous school outings and fundraisers, and helped the Royal BC Museum's Vertebrate Zoology Division compile records on bird sightings for the four-volume set of the Birds of British Columbia.

Joan's caring nature also extended to animals. As a child, her beloved pets were Buddy, a fox terrier and enthusiastic hiking partner who had to be carried home in her backpack after running himself ragged along the trails; Smoky, a Newfoundland dog, which her mother turned into a lap dog (literally), and who became the neighbourhood children's prized sled dog; and her cat, Peaches, who produced litters of pink kittens. Joan would have given a home to any animal but was especially heartbroken when her mother said "No!" to bringing home a piglet. As an adult, Joan continued to welcome numerous pets into her family's life, a quality that enriched the world of her daughters, and a trait that they both naturally adopted.

With time, Joan realized her dream of being a world traveller. She lived in Halifax, NS and Plymouth, England with Ron while he was on training courses, and made a number of family driving holidays throughout western Canada en route to visiting his family in Manitoba. When he retired, Ron took Joan to some of his favourite places in the world: Hawaii, Samoa, Fiji, the Cook Islands, Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Barbados, and Cuba. She also fell in love with the Chilcotin grasslands when Tracey was doing her Master's research there. Joan would often reminisce about the day they ended up in the middle of a cattle drive while picnicking out in the grasslands. Having had uncles who ranched in southern Alberta, she was perfectly at ease chatting with the rancher, and loved the fact that he claimed his cattle dog was better than three cowboys.

Joan passed away on December 18, 2023, a day before her 95th birthday. She was predeceased by her sister Clare (1999), husband Ron (2000), and son-in-law Bob Butler (2012). She will be remembered for her generous nature, sense of humour, sweet smile, and her laughter—oh that laugh! Her daughters will be forever grateful to the staff of Sidney All Care for welcoming them and Joan into their family, treating Joan with the kindness and compassion she so rightfully deserved, and creating a sacred space to allow her to pass with grace and dignity shortly after hearing one of her favourite pieces of music: Rachmaninoff's Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini.

One of Joan's fondest memories of growing up in Grande Prairie was the nights she and Clare would walk hand-in-hand along the streets of the town as the Northern Lights filled the sky overhead. They would take 10 steps while looking down, stop, and then look up to see how much the dance of lights had changed. May those lights continue to dance for you, Mom, in the most spectacular way.