REMEMBERING

Mary Elizabeth McMurchie (Beth)

Died: August 30, 2022

May 28, 1933-August 30, 2022

During the early hours of August 30, 2022, our mother—Mary Elizabeth (Beth) McMurchie—died peacefully at British Columbia's Christine Morrison Hospice, Mission Memorial Hospital, where she was lovingly cared for in her final days by Rhonda, Rich, and hospice staff.

Born in Delia, Alberta, on May 28, 1933, on the unforgiving prairies during the depths of the Great Depression, Beth's life ran the gamut of joy and sorrow as she met the everyday challenges and concerns of family, friends, and work, of building a life for which she could feel genuinely proud. This was never easy, but her fierce independence, sense of humour, and grit allowed her to accomplish things that gave her great satisfaction. We share these traits and her achievements as we honour her memory and celebrate her life as a traveler, seeker of knowledge, parent, social worker, writer, and sometime performer.

The youngest of John and Jessie McMurchie's four daughters, Beth was a natural performer. As a child, she loved to decorate her bicycle and dress up her dog, shepherding both into parades and contests in order to win prizes, especially tickets to the movies that would inspire her own creative endeavors. Although we did not witness her childhood exploits, we

certainly observed her love of performance over the years. She sang in the choirs of the churches she attended, purchased the sheet music and albums that inspired our love of music, and enjoyed attending the symphony, particularly when she accompanied Don and the Calgary Youth Orchestra to the United Kingdom. Looking back over her adult life, we also know that Beth found the greatest joy singing in the choir of the inaugural and ensuing Canadian Badlands Passion Plays during her time in Drumheller, Alberta, particularly the summer when she performed in the Passion Play with her granddaughter Laura. And lest we forget, we all got to witness Beth's love of performing during family reunions. During one such family get-together, Beth and her three older sisters, Sal, Marg, and Jackie, sang an uproarious rendition of Irving Berlin's 1954 hit song, "Sisters" from the movie White Christmas, complete with choreography.

Fiercely independent and restless in spirit, Beth also chased travel experiences (and a few moves—to Calgary, Alberta, then Findlay, Ohio, followed by a return to Calgary, and thence on to Lac La Biche, Alberta, Kamloops, British Columbia, Drumheller and Lethbridge, Alberta, and

finally to Maple Ridge, then Mission, British Columbia) with eagerness, even abandon. Her enthusiasm for a good road trip also inspired our own wanderlusts and the excursions we took with her. Among these adventures, Beth's desire for a jaunt down the Pacific Coast to Disneyland with Jocelyn, Rhonda and Rich still stands out, driving through the nights to get there and returning to British Columbia and Alberta through blinding blizzards. We could also celebrate her insatiable appetite for travel in bulging files of postcards from "MB," Mama Beth, which reached us during her journeys across Canada and the United States to visit and travel

with us and babysit her grandchildren, or from her solo tour of Greece and Turkey to trips with Jocelyn to Scotland. and with Rhonda to England and France as well as a cruise to Alaska. In her later years, each of us additionally enjoyed lovely drives with Beth to her beloved Harrison Lake.

Happily for all of us, she additionally leaves behind gorgeous photographic albums and journal jottings on which we can reflect in the years to come.

Beyond her love of travel, Beth sought experiences through education. At the age of 48, while raising her two younger children, Beth enrolled at the University of Calgary, to engage in undergraduate work in Psychology. Inspired by the education Don had received at Northwestern University, and the intellectual sparring that would define the second half of her life, Beth juggled her multiple responsibilities while simultaneously throwing herself into her studies. As she wended her way from a first-year university student to graduation, a concatenation of events also pushed Beth into the world of social work and service on boards of education. She therefore learned to juggle even more work, ultimately receiving her B.S. in Psychology at the age of 52, and earning various social work certificates as she moved from one community to another as a child welfare champion, in social work positions she held until her retirement at age 62.

Beth's creative spirit continued after retirement, and her most precious moments during her final two decades were as a writer, mother, grandparent, and great-grandparent. During her 70s and early 80s, Beth wrote two works of fiction that allowed her to contemplate her life and

her family's long history. As she often noted, the people in her novels were as real to her as any living person, and the love she had for her characters shines through in every line of these works: Golden Ribbons (2019) and Outside the Circle (2020).

In her final years, Beth treasured the photographs and stories of children and grandchildren she received from Don and Rich. When we reflect on Beth's feats and life, we realize how much she accomplished. Indeed, we consider her a trail-blazing person, someone who taught us many lessons and no doubt influenced many of our own intellectual and artistic

odysseys as well as life decisions. Following her passing, we have also realized

how much we have gained from Beth’s example, including her skepticism of authority figures. She taught us to trust our own instincts, to fight for the lives of purpose we all seek to lead. For these and other gifts, we are truly grateful.

We welcome the chance to read your memories of Beth, and ask that in lieu of flowers you consider making donations to The Cedars (604-826-2194, https://www.missionseniors.ca/our-

communities/the-cedars/, and/or the Mission Hospice Society (Christine Morrison Hospice, http://www.missionhospice.bc.ca/donate/), the two institutions with staff who supported our mother’s life, and death, with dignity in her final years and days. Rest in Peace and Power, dear

Beth.

Don Schultz (Alana Gralen), Ottawa, Ontario; and grandchildren Laura (Simon Schreiber) and Patrick (Kate Potlog), as well as great-grandchildren Nina, Hugo, Daniel, Eli, and Daria, all of Quebec

Jocelyn Wills (Tom Predhome), Brooklyn, New York

Rhonda Schultz (Rory Dafoe), Maple Ridge, British Columbia

Richard Schultz (Marisol Marin), San Diego, California; and grandchildren Eva and Delia, both of California.