REMEMBERING

Helen Lois Gunn

March 23, 1942 - October 6, 2026

Helen Lois Gunn (née Softley), age 84, died at home on Salt Spring Island on Oct. 6th, 2026, surrounded by family and her loyal dog, Scout.

She is survived by her husband Jack, son John (Salomée) and daughter Jean (Chris) from Alberta, and granddaughters Aislinn (Mike) from Alberta, Lily from Ontario, and Floriane and Adelaide from Quebec. She is also survived by brother William (Linda) and niece Mary from Alberta. She was predeceased by dear cousin Georgia Conn. Helen and Jack had many friends on Salt Spring, but a special relationship developed over the past 26 years with neighbours Wendy Slyter and David Courtney who are honorary members of the family. Helen inherited her spirit from her namesake aunt, Helen Conn, who was a frequent visitor on Salt Spring, and with whom she shared all her life experiences, and to whom her children and grandchildren still refer to as “Great Aunt Helen”. Helen was from the prairies, daughter of Leonard and Georgina Softley, but she grew up in Winnipeg and Toronto. She attended McGill University in Montreal and graduated in 1964 with a B.Sc. in Physical and Occupational Therapy, for which she was awarded the Gold Medal for highest marks in her class. She excelled in Ice Hockey and other sports at the inter-university level. After she and Jack were married in 1965, she followed when his work took him to Edmonton, Regina (where their two children were born), Calgary, Denver, Houston, and to Portugal. They returned to Canada in 1976 so that their children could attend secondary school and then university in their home country.

Helen devoted all her time to raising her children, who were very involved in figure skating and skiing, and doing volunteer work wherever the opportunities arose. She had a particular interest in the Association for the Rehabilitation of the Brain Injured. After the children left home for educational and employment opportunities, she and Jack chose Salt Spring Island for retirement. When their new home was completed,

Helen did the landscaping, which led to a vegetable garden, fruit trees, a greenhouse, and a rose garden. She doted on her granddaughters, enthusiastically supporting them and welcoming each when they arrived to visit. When she had free time, she volunteered for the Home Support Services Society, and the Canadian Federation of University Women in raising funds to assist girls in Africa and Asia to have higher educational opportunities. She loved skiing at Mt. Washington, and ice dancing at the Tillicum Arena. She took pride in swimming in Duck Bay whenever the weather would allow. She walked with her Shelties over many of the trails in the area. She could be found frequently at the corner table at TJBeans having long conversations with friends. She and Jack were early supporters of the Salt Spring Folk Club and had season tickets 1 and 2. They often took shelter from the rain, huddled in the doorway at Fulford Hall waiting for the doors to open before every performance.

Helen battled valiantly until Alzheimer's cruelly robbed her of her vitality. Her daughter Jean devoted most of her time over the past two years to assisting Jack in caring for her mother. We would like to thank all those at the Royal Jubilee Hospital and on Salt Spring Island who were involved in her care. Remember her sitting in the window seat with her dog at her feet, sipping a glass of wine, listening to a Leonard Cohen song, and breathing in the magic of a fresh rose from the garden.

There will be no funeral service. Those wishing to honour Helen's life could consider donations to the Salt Spring Island Conservancy.