



REMEMBERING Judith Weeden (Judy)

1932 - 2026

Judy Weeden fell while working in her Ganges pottery studio on February 11, suffering a concussion from which she never recovered. She died that evening in Lady Minto Hospital despite the gentle care of son Bristol, husband Bob, and Hospital staff. Her daughter Kim and son Robert soon gathered 'round.

Judy was best known for her marvellous ceramics, but she was much more than a potter. She could garden everywhere: in a windowsill oyster shell or flower patch at timberline. Her veggies and the meat from caribou and moose fed her family in its youthful decades in Alaska, and on the day she died she had carried the vigorous green leaves of overwintering 'chard into her kitchen. She was co-builder of a 30 x 40 foot home in Fairbanks built of spruce logs from which she had stripped bark, then washed with Clorox to deter mould. When we came to Salt Spring Island in 1990 it was her inspiration and helping hammer that converted a pig barn to a spacious, light-filled ceramics studio complex.

Judy was 7 in 1939 when her family squeezed through Hitler's fingers to start their Canadian lives. They bought a badly run-down farm 50 miles from Toronto. She liked the farm with its vigorous green and brown life but liked wilder country better. She learned Canadian quickly, did well at school, and eventually earned an MSc in Ecology from the University of Toronto. Feeling an urge to see more of Canada's landscapes, she drove to Vancouver in 1956 to start a PhD in ecology at the University of British Columbia. She was derailed by meeting Bob, marrying him on the family farm in Enniskillen, Ontario, then driving the dusty, unpaved Alaska Highway to Fairbanks and her job teaching comparative anatomy and physiology at the university there.

Twelve years later her urge to work creatively with her hands could be denied no

longer. With family help she backpacked clay from a pit at the edge of Mt. McKinley (later Denali) National Park, the start of a lifelong career. She became one of western Canada's best potters. She brought to her fingertips both a fusion and an independent expression of her sources: a desire that vessels be honestly useful, her love of nature as revealed in leaf and feather, the always-surprising forms her imagination brought out of the clay, and the courage to dare novelty.

Several years ago her eyesight began to fail and her artistic vigour waned. She could still dream creatively and tactile memory could give the imagined work a partial reality. She never stopped her daily trudge to her studio.

A celebration of Judy's life and art is planned for spring.

