



## **GEORGINA GWENDOLYN MCKENZIE (HOOPER)**

Date of Passing: Dec 06, 2018

GEORGINA GWENDOLYN MCKENZIE (HOOPER) Our unforgettable wife, mother, grandmother and aunt passed away at Fred Douglas Lodge, Winnipeg, on Thursday, December 6, 2018, at the age of 89. Gwen is survived by her children: David (Cynthia) McKenzie, Lynn (John) Watling, Marjorie McKenzie and Susan McKenzie (Michael Bereziak); as well as her nine grandchildren: Greg, Mark, Michael, Scott, Deborah, Stephen, Jill Watling (Josh Laforte), Catherine and Jacquelyn; sister-in-law Johanna McKenzie; and Gwen's nieces and nephews: Robert, Wendy, Joan, Glenn, Greg and Paula. Gwen was predeceased by her beloved husband Ron in 2015, her only sister June Rennie, brothers-in-law, Don Rennie and Colin McKenzie, and by her parents, Belle and Jack Hooper. Mom was born in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, "right after the Great Stock Market Crash of '29." She was an outdoorsy person, deeply tanned from her summer days at the beach. Gwen always had a sparkle in her eye and a smile on her face, ready and willing to get things moving and shaking, but always in her confident, smiling, quiet way. She was gracious, cheerful, organized and always entertaining. Mom enjoyed sports. She was on her Provincial Basketball championship team in grade ten at a height of 5'2". She also played volleyball, softball and was fairly good at track. Gwen loved to swim in salty mineral spa Little Lake Manitou by their summer cabin near Watrous. Curling constantly was in her future, as well as winning the Winnipeg City Champs and many more curling championships. We used to feel that we grew up at a curling rink during the winter. Gwen also played golf alongside Ron and when we were younger we spent much of our summers on the golf courses with them. Mom was a crack bowler and belonged to the St. Vital Bowling League for many years. She enjoyed trying out the sport of speed walking in her 60s and kept up with her "Mover Fuzz" nickname from university. Gwen always wanted to be a nurse and worked as a nurse's aide during the

summer after grade twelve in a tuberculosis ward in Prince Albert. To her great chagrin, Mom discovered she wasn't strong enough to lift the patients, so her childhood dream was dashed. Mom met Dad at the University of Saskatchewan where they both received their Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. She was his lab partner in second year chemistry and swept him off his feet with her exuberance and good humour. After marriage Gwen supported Ron through his masters degree working as a secretary. Mom had many awesome adventures with Dad including: the immigration to the US in June 1954 with a newborn baby to complete Ron's PhD studies; travelling by car over 1000 miles two weeks overdue with her second child to get to her father-in-law's funeral; living in Vienna with their family of six in 1970-1971; and in Palmerston North, New Zealand in 1981-1982 with Ron and Susan; travel throughout western Europe; tent camping after they were both over 65 to golf at Cypress Hills; and New Zealand for 33 years of visits. They were very blessed to have a second group of good friends there as well as in Winnipeg. Mom assisted Dad as an unpaid research assistant for over 40 years, culminating with having an oat variety named after her - AC Gwen, by Ron's replacement who was very aware of how much she had helped her husband in the fields in New Zealand. Gwen was an avid horticulturalist and never forgot a plant. Her award-winning flowerbeds graced her home. During all this time, she typed student masters and doctoral theses and essays, hand painted designs on homemade curtains, sewing much of our clothing so well that our friends didn't know that they weren't purchased at the store, and Gwen was an ardent volunteer. Gwen was a grade two Sunday school teacher for countless years at Fort Gary United Church in Winnipeg. For years afterwards she and Ron drove shut-ins to enjoy church with them. Mom joined Brownies and Guides as a leader for 12 years so that her daughters could enroll and enjoy the outdoors. Gwen received the Volunteer of the Year Award in 1979 while she ran the Richmond-Kings skating programs for years while Susan skated. At the same time Mom moved up in the ranks of Sport Manitoba Track and Field Volunteer Officials from: Timer, Starter, Judge, Assistant Chief and Chief, until she was travelling across Canada to chief large track and field events climaxing with our 1999 Winnipeg Pan Am Games. During that time she also travelled by car to many schools across Manitoba or flew in small planes up the east side of Lake Winnipeg to the small isolated schools found there. She along with one or two others brought track and field training to the school staffs and stayed to help them run their Track and Field events. This all began due to involvement as Marjorie's track club's secretary. A week before she died she was recognized by a former track athlete who had grown up knowing her, perhaps from the yearly Manitoba Games. Gwen was an equal rights feminist since her era didn't support married women working in her field. Whether her children were boys or girls they received both dolls and trucks, etc. as gifts. Mom felt for male or female the sky was the limit to what you could accomplish and that if you wanted something bad enough you could soar and reach any goal you set for yourself. She pushed us to be independent whether we wanted to be or not. Put a smile on your face and fake it until you make it resounded in my shy ears. Mom played the cornet, similar to a trumpet, in the Air Cadet marching band for four years, and she also preformed solos. Mom also played violin and the piano and sang beautifully up until the last couple of years of her life. Gwen loved to dance. Ron was tone-deaf but she managed to convince him to square dance one night a week for many years. Mom entertained her coffee groups during the daytime, and Ron's colleagues with monthly dinners. She was also a keen reader, reading her book long into the night. Gwen's all consuming love of her husband,

children and grandchildren made her the rock on which her family stood, supporting them throughout good times and bad. Mom guided by strong but quiet example. She was always there to act as a sounding board to bounce one's ideas off of or to rescue you from keys locked in your car, to rides home at 2:00 a.m. Mom did all this while keeping us in line, teaching us how to be kind, helpful, and independent and then encouraging our children to be the same. Mom was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 1990. Dad and she were determined that they would stop it in its tracks by daily walking and golfing to keep Mom moving. In the winters, they travelled to New Zealand to continue the exercise! Gwen didn't stop volunteering at Manitoba Track and Field for another 10 years. It worked extremely well until 2011 when Dad ran into difficulties and had to cut back on the walking although they still walked 10,000 steps a day and golfed until early 2014 when Mom's disease finally raised havoc with her balance and length of step. We know in our hearts that Mom is finally back at Dad's side again, playing on that perfect golf course in the sky, still keeping things moving and shaking, quietly with her sunny smile. Dad's eyes are twinkling as he grins and hugs her. She couldn't bear to be apart from him another minute. The family would like to thank the nurses and staff at Fred Douglas Lodge, Marcel the Hairdresser, and Cheryl from Comfort of Care Home for their loving care of Mom these past years. Cremation has occurred and a memorial service will take place in June.  
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