



Obituary of Rowena and Erwood Reynolds

Obituary of Rowena Reynolds

If you felt a sudden whoosh and a light dimming in the world during the early hours of Easter Monday, you were not mistaken. In her 93rd year, after a very short and precipitous decline, Rowena Reynolds left us for the great beyond. She was the beloved wife of 69 years, 8 months, and 23 days (not that they were counting) of Erwood Reynolds, now resident of Providence Manor. Precious, perfect mother of Wendy and Sean (who called her 'RM', his 'real mother' because that's what she was). Adored grandmother of Michael and Leslie, Dustin, and Laura. Predeceased by daughter Denise, and brothers Lloyd (Keitha), Keith (Gwen), and Claude (Georgia). Survived by sister-in-law (but truly a sister) Jean Clair and her wonderful brother-in-law Mel Martin. Also survived by many loving nieces and nephews who looked upon Aunt Rowena as a mentor and a role model for a life well lived.

Born on August 27, 1929, on the family farm, Rowena was the miracle daughter of Nettie Jane Wallace and LeRoy Peck Leonard, almost twenty years younger than her closest brother in age. Throughout her life, Rowena claimed she caused the 1929 stock market crash. But let's not blame her for that. She grew up with—it's true—a pet groundhog and a lifelong love of animals, especially cats and dogs, most recently Tuxedo and Mouse and grand dog Boone.

Erwood and Rowena met in Buzztown (aka Verona), a place Rowena's mother had forbidden her to hang out because it was too wild. Luckily, Rowena did not heed her mother's warnings for one summery Friday night in 1951, she and a friend were parading the Buzztown streets, as only glamorous and spunky young women can do, when Erwood drove by in his car and whistled at her. One thing led to another, and they were married in July 1952, forming a formidable team. Wendy came along soon thereafter, and the family was complete until the adoption of Denise almost 20 years later. Caregiving was a part of their married life from the get go, caring for both Nettie and LeRoy in the family home until their respective deaths.

At her mother's insistence, after high school Rowena attended 'normal school' in Peterborough to attain her teaching certificate. Despite claiming at the time that she really didn't like children, she went on to an outstanding career as an elementary school teacher. And, boy, did she love kids and kids loved her. Her teaching career began in a one room school in Wilmerdale where some of those kids were as old as she was and definitely bigger than she was at 5 feet 1 inch and 100 pounds. She ended her career as the most esteemed teacher in another one room private school in Camden East, sponsored by the Harrowsmith/Equinox magazine crew. She says this was the best teaching experience of her career. In between, she

taught in rural Frontenac County, in two or three schools in Kingston, was a consultant in the Lennox and Addington Board of Education and was a teaching principal when she retired from the public school system, having won many teaching awards and accolades. Rowena's impact on the lives of her students and their parents is renowned, as is the inspiration she provided to others to become educators, too.

Throughout her lifetime, Rowena was an active member of the United Church of Canada community, driven not only by a strong spiritual belief but also by the desire to serve others and be active in that service—as a Sunday School teacher, a choir leader, a pianist for Sunday services (as recently as few months ago), a leading member of the UCW. Whether in Hartington, Napanee, her beloved Matawatchan, or in Kingston at the Zion United Church, she was an integral part of the congregation wherever she went.

Rowena was committed to community service in all its aspects. She and Erwood were dedicated members of the Lions Club and upon Rowena's retirement, when they moved to the Griffith/Matawatchan area, they took that commitment with them and instigated the formation of the local club, which continues to thrive to this day. They enjoyed the comradeship, the travels, but most of all the benefits the Club could provide to the community.

And then, on top of all this, Rowena raised her three grandchildren. In particular, at the age of 70, she took on the responsibility of raising Dustin, and was devoted to his care from his infancy, throughout his trials with leukemia and other challenges, until his late teens. Intensely proud of all her grandchildren's achievements, especially Michael's, she never gave up on encouraging Dustin to achieve. And he has.

Rowena touched the lives of so many. Through her generosity of spirit, her genuine love of people, her charm, and her incredible sense of humour (and that laugh!), she has an enviably wide circle of friends, all of whom adored her and believe it was an honour to have known her. We will make a special shout out to the community of friends in Matawatchan, where she was extremely happy to live in her retirement, but this should in no way diminish the love she had for friends from everywhere throughout her life, who will deeply miss her phone calls to sing Happy Birthday, her preparation of Nuts and Bolts at Christmas, and her delivery of muffins and cookies throughout the year. The Muffin Queen of Matawatchan! Rowena did everything with gusto and determination.

Through everything, she was the consummate entertainer, playing piano at every opportunity, especially with her band in Matawatchan. She plugged on with spirit and bravery through everything life threw at her, including the very tough last two months. We called her the 'mighty mite' because, despite her increasingly diminutive size, there was no one with a larger heart, spirit, or zest for life. And her brain never stopped ticking over To Do lists, right up until her last breaths. Whether you knew her for five minutes or five decades, you knew you were in the presence of someone extraordinarily special.

It seems selfish to say, but we wanted more time. Even though she had been with us for almost 93 years, it wasn't enough. Our hearts have a hole blown straight through them. She was the best wife, mother, grandmother, and friend who ever walked the earth.

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Obituary of Erwood Reynolds

Erwood Reynolds August 27th, 1931, to March 30th, 2023, In his 92nd year, surrounded by the love of Wendy, Sean, and Michael and in the compassionate care of Providence Manor, Erwood - the strong, handsome, gregarious, hard-working, fun-loving, community-minded, stubborn, even-tempered (haha!) clothes horse - died on March 30th, 2023. He put up a real fight but, in the end, took a sudden breath and was gone. Erwood has been reunited with his beloved wife of 70 years, Rowena (2022). He was also predeceased by his daughter Denise (2021). He was a devoted father to Wendy and her husband, Sean, who provided boundless care to Erwood in his last years. He will be always missed by grandchildren Michael, Dustin, and Laura, who regarded him as a father. Erwood is the last man standing among his siblings, Elwood, Garth, Bruce, and Marilyn, and his parents Olive (Bartsch) and Harold. He is survived by his adored sister-in-law, Jean Clair, and much-loved brother-in-law, Mel Martin, in addition to many nieces and nephews, cousins (especially Glen Convery and those Snider girls!), and So. Many. Friends. Born in Oak Flats (and we'll give you a lollipop if you know where that is. Hint: it's north of Buzztown) on August 27th, 1931, Erwood grew up on the family farm with his wonderful parents, one older and two younger brothers, and his beloved sister. Ever wonder where that name came from? As the second child, younger brother to Elwood, his parents

turned to Harold's parents to name the little baby. The grandparents thought it would be cute to have a name that rhymed with Elwood. So Erwood it was. Oddly, there weren't ever nicknames like Woody that evolved. Sure, there were misspellings (Irwood or Derwood), and Rowena sometimes called him "Erd." As Rowena was fond of saying, there was no mistaking who Erwood and Rowena were, for they were the only ones in the world. That's for sure. Erwood's formal education was cut short by WWII and he left school in Grade 10 to help out on the farm. But he did not let a lack of education hold him back from being successful. And he worked hard.

Erwood worked for "the Locomotive" (Canadian Locomotive Company), erected the hydro lines in the early 1950's that brought power to the Ottawa Valley community he called home fifty years later, was a highly skilled auto body mechanic in Kingston and Verona, and began his own construction company in Napanee and later in Griffith/Matawatchan. Really, he never truly retired; well into his '80's, he was still answering the calls of frantic neighbours in cottages with leaky pipes or holes chewed by wildlife that needed fixing. By the 1950's, Erwood turned into a handsome young buck who one summer evening almost literally ran into Rowena, herself a glamorous young woman parading the streets of Buzztown (ok, Verona), when he was driving around in his car. He whistled at her. They married in July of 1952.

Wendy was born in 1953. (The math checks out.) Their house in Hartington was full of family - Rowena's parents, Bruce and Marilyn, nieces and nephews, cousins to keep Wendy company, later on the Hatfield kids, Cindy, Steve, and Jeff, who were like his own. Denise joined the family in 1971, a couple of years after the move to Napanee. When her children, Michael, Laura, and Dustin, arrived on the scene, Erwood and Rowena devoted themselves to their care, with Michael, and Dustin especially, living with them full-time. Erwood delighted in showing the ropes to his grandchildren, whether building things or fishing or riding four wheelers through the woods.

Always involved in activities to help others in their community, Erwood was a strong guiding light in several different Lions Clubs, ending by establishing (with support from Rowena's creative energy) the club in Griffith. He was a District Governor in the late '80's and with Rowena travelled extensively throughout North America and internationally for Lions conventions and activities. And no matter what the local Club was doing, he did it - fundraising, bartending (he loved that), rounding up new members - he was constantly working to contribute to his community with the Lions. Erwood also was a dedicated member of the United Church wherever they lived. He was a steward of the church, which meant he assisted in financial matters. And he washed a lot of dishes and carved a lot of turkey at community dinners in Matawatchan.

We'll always remember the other things Erwood loved, especially the outdoorsy things: camping before we all had cottages; teaching (or trying to teach) family and friends to waterski; in a boat, fishing; grilling big steaks on the barbeque; skidooring (before we all wore helmets - yikes!); hunting at the family hunting camp; feeding his birds at his many bird feeders, even in the dead of winter when he was in his late '80's and had very limited mobility. He was a guy who was always on the move and who never stopped until the last couple of years of his life. Indoors, Erwood loved to read newspapers and watch the news on TV. He did crossword puzzles and Sudokus (in pen!) every morning. Oh yes and watching his beloved Toronto Maple Leafs and Blue Jays baseball with Dustin. And Erwood loved having people around. Need a rum and coke, a funny story, a game of cards? Stop in anytime to see Erwood. And he didn't want you to leave. "Oh, come on, stay a little longer" he'd say. He had the famous Reynolds stubbornness and temper (known in the family as "getting your Reynolds up") but he was also kind and generous. If Wendy or one of the grandchildren wanted something, they got it. Erwood loved to dress up and to buy clothes for Rowena. The two of them were the most dapper couple around. Haircuts were regularly scheduled, and he spent twice as long in the bathroom grooming as any of the rest of us. Rowena would say "get in the bathroom before he does because he'll never come out." He always looked great.

A lifelong joiner, he continued that impulse in Providence Manor. Erwood became a true member of their wonderful community. If you couldn't find him in his room, he was in the auditorium listening to music or in the sunroom making crafts or watching a movie or doing chair exercises. He engaged in any and all recreational activities and social events on offer. He was even a resident member of the Food and Activities Committee. He was well-loved by staff and residents with whom he loved to kibbitz and joke. We cannot thank all the staff enough, but especially those on Sydenham 5 who looked after him with love, empathy, humour, and professionalism.

Written by Betsy Sayers for the Griffith & Matawatchan & Denbigh & Vennachar News & Views column for the Madawaska Highlander.

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