

Mary Lee Clarkson (Straka)

February 2, 1935 – July 20, 2016



Mary turned ordinary into extraordinary. She made cupcake cakes long before they were cool, she believed that vinegar was good for at least ten things and that you should only hang dry your clothes. In addition to being thoughtful, witty and incredibly kind, she was a stain removal guru, income tax aficionado & Grandma Extraordinaire - Eulogy

Mary was the 2nd child born to Vlashek (known as James) & Antonia Straka (nee Debeljak) on February 2nd, 1935 in Farmington, BC. Her parents taught her the value of hard work, integrity & respect. They also taught her how to play a mean hand of canasta.

After graduating from LaSalle School of Bookkeeping, Mary worked in the office at the Dawson Creek Co-op. It was there that she met a hand-

some electrician named Robert (Bob) Clarkson. They were married on June 1st, 1957. Later that year, Bob and Mary opened Clarkson's Electric Ltd, where they were the proprietors for many years. Bob and Mary enjoyed travelling, playing cards, gardening, and spending time with their friends. In addition to this, Mary devoted a large amount of time to volunteer work in both FSJ and DC. Above all, Mary loved her family. She spent many weekends visiting her parents & siblings.

In looking for a new adventure, the farm girl at heart packed her bags & moved to the city. Bob and Mary returned to the Peace River area years later, after their only grandchild was born. Bob and Mary took great pride in raising their "Little Sweetstuff", Kristy.

In an effort to ensure Kristy learned how to share, Mary opened a small daycare. Gramma (as all the kids called her) enjoyed these golden years immensely. Gramma maintained relationships with the kids, even after the kids became adults. Gramma, was always there to listen, pour you a cup of tea and offer up a solid piece of advice. When Bob passed away suddenly (the day before their 50th Wedding Anniversary), Mary was heartbroken. But, being the positive and humorous soul she was, she later said (jokingly) "He couldn't stand me one more day". Truth be told, that man had written her love letters for several years before he finally popped the question. Mary was a catch, and Bob knew it.

After Bob's passing, Mary lived alone and she did it with strength and grace. Mary kept busy and devoted her time to things she enjoyed; knitting, gardening, walks, bowling, volunteer work, reading and spending time with her loved ones. In addition to watching curling, she was an avid Vancouver Canucks fan. Mary participated in the Peace Country Craft Sale each November where she sold scarves, dishcloths and copies of her granddaughter's musical endeavours. Mary was immensely proud of Kristy's talents, and she certainly wasn't afraid to express it. If Kristy was on the radio and you were in Ewe's Knitting (where Mary worked), the radio got turned up.

Mary always had treats for her Great Grand Animals (Maggie, Brutus & Spike), extra mits in her purse (in case she saw someone who looked cold), and a hug, joke or income tax advice for anyone who needed it. Mary truly lived life to the fullest, and lived by the motto "one day at a time".

After a brief battle with cancer, Mary passed away on July 20th, 2016, surrounded by her loved ones. Mary remained positive, even in illness. As much as she is missed (and trust us, she is missed more than we could ever possibly express) we find great comfort in knowing that she has been re-united with her great love, Bob.

Mary taught us everything, except how to live without her. Her influence is missed by so many people. So, if ever in doubt, we will simply ask ourselves "What Would Mary Do?" The life lessons she has instilled will undoubtedly stand the test of time. Mary has left us with many gifts, but most importantly she leaves behind a legacy of love.

Mary is survived by her only daughter, Sharron Howes. Mary will be lovingly remembered by her Granddaughter Kristy Clarkson (Howes), Sisters Vlasta Smolik & Angela Ekins, Brothers Fred & Bob (Linda) Straka, numerous nieces and nephews, her bowling team, her crew at Ewes Knitting & everyone who loved and knew her simply as "Gramma".

A private funeral was held on August 2nd, 2016. A public celebration of life followed. Donations in Mary's memory can be made to the Canadian Cancer Society or Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Fort St John.