



## **Derwyn Whitbread**

**Lived an Expanded Life of  
Ordinary Goodness which  
continues to have a  
Ranging, Broad and Deep  
Impact**



Stan's Secret Passage  
(through the laundry room)  
to Derwyn's room

Kathleen Derwyn Whitbread née McLaughlin has departed this incarnation. She transitioned peacefully on Sunday, August 21, 2022 at the age of 90 years at the Edmonton General Continuing Care Centre where she had made her home since 2015. Her husband of 68 years, Stan Whitbread, had a “secret passage” through the laundry room to Derwyn’s room on the same unit which he frequently used to check on, touch and snuggle with Derwyn during the last few months and days. The fact that we can say that Derwyn is survived by her husband, Stan, is a blessing as he had hip surgery shortly after Derwyn’s death from which he is recovering.

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## Survived by...

Derwyn is also survived by her daughter, Katherine Whitbread; her granddaughter (and flower farmer), Aurora Whitbread; her nephews, Robert Madill and Howard McLaughlin; her nieces, Holly Madill and Lama Dechi (née Jane Madill); her grandnephews and nieces, Jamie Madill, Sarah McLaughlin and Paul McLaughlin; and so many life-long friends and relatives by blood, marriage and soul-affinity who felt to her like sons, daughters, nieces and nephews that the true list is impossible to complete. Such was her capacity to reach out and make deep and abiding relationships that she was probably never in unrequited love in her life. If you felt that Derwyn was a mom to you, she considered you a son or a daughter. As she frequently put it, “you are in the family.”

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## Predeceased by...

Derwyn was predeceased by her resilient, resourceful, community-minded parents, Edith Mary McLaughlin née Howard and Charles Ellsworth McLaughlin; as well as her brothers, Howard McLaughlin (WWII Royal Air Force pilot and hero) and Bruce McLaughlin; and by her sister, Mary Madill née McLaughlin. She enjoyed her Uncles and Aunts enormously especially her mother’s sisters, Katie Morrison née Howard and Eva O Howard, and her Uncle Urban Howard.

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## Professional Powerhouse...

During her lifetime, Derwyn lavished precious gifts of the spirit with an open hand on whomever she was with. She considered all people, all beings, to be intrinsically equally valuable. She shone with devotion to practical equality, manifesting it interpersonally and systematically. Her plans and protocols for intervention in family violence are still the preferred methods. She influenced the evolution of Social Work in Alberta as a frontline Social Worker, defender of the

profession, policy-maker, international representative of Social Work and Teacher of Social Work at Norquest College. Fun fact: in the 1980s, Derwyn sued the Catholic Church regarding a matter of professional integrity for the Social Work profession and she won. The Judge ruled that Social Workers' professional ethics should be honoured and respected the same as other helping professionals. Through her lifelong actions of ordinary goodness, she proved that the impact of that goodness can be both expanded and magnified to widely benefit many beings.

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## Compassion

Derwyn faced and transcended unusual challenges, some of which remained relatively unknown even in her circles of friends. Most people know of her forty-year struggle to have a normal family life given unwanted attention from a stalker who thought of her as his mother, too. Derwyn approached that situation with compassion for everyone including him. Fewer know of the inoperable brain tumour discovered circa 2010 that was exerting pressure on the anxiety button of her brain. Despite never being able to simply relax because of relentless anxiety, Derwyn required herself to achieve more. She called herself “counter-phobic” to emphasize the need to address personal fears directly and it’s fair to say it was harder for her to do so with her condition. Derwyn responded compassionately and collaboratively in every circumstance approving of only the plans that uphold the well-being of all involved even when she had been personally harmed — perhaps especially then. When life gave her lemons personally, she made lemonade and made sure everyone got some. At Maple Ridge, a facility for teenage girls co-run by the Catholic Church where Derwyn worked on staff development, one girl stabbed another. The nuns and other social workers ran to help the girl who was stabbed (which was obviously quite appropriate). Derwyn ran to the aid of the girl who did the stabbing; such was her compassion and commitment to equality that there wasn’t a person with whom she couldn’t empathize.

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## Feminist Aspect...

She was a lifelong feminist who had deep love and respect for all people, all beings, women and men included. At nine years old, she was shocked and traumatized by the loss of her beloved older brother in WWII. During the war years, she was moved by the lore of Rosie the Riveter and the sacrifices the Suffragettes had made to bring women the right to vote. She focused her feminist efforts as President of the Alberta Status of Women Action Committee and with a theatrical review of changing divorce law in the late 1970s because she wanted her effort to help everyone. She believed that “addressing equality between the sexes” would have a positive effect for all.

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## Mavin of Social Justice, Style, Politics and Parties...

Derwyn was an original. She thought like a Sixties youth in the Fifties. Derwyn successfully intervened in a bar fight before it was even legal for men and women to sit together in a licensed premises. Derwyn was a foodie long before the term was coined. Derwyn and Stan were inspired creators of a social occasion. Derwyn sparked and nurtured a gourmet club that met about once a month for 44 years. As a teenager, Katherine observed that her parents were masterful hosts and inspired social butterflies who could party Katherine under the table any night of the week. Once Katherine thought they were home early at 1:30 am but, as it turned out, they were picking up some long-playing records (a source of music from before the Walkman, iPod and Spotify) in order to head back to the gourmet club for more dancing. For decades, Derwyn and Stan hosted Sunday family dinners, Christmas, Easter, birthdays and other occasions. Derwyn held countless parties and occasions during which the conversations were thoughtful and scintillating. She was a fun, welcomed guest. One of Derwyn’s quips was, “if the host and hostess would only go to bed, we could all go home.” Derwyn and Stan supported their parents and other senior family members through their later years with intense creativity and devotion. At one point, Derwyn’s Aunt Eva telephoned Derwyn at work to inform her that, due to Eva’s emotional ambivalence about moving out of her apartment into a Senior’s

Home, Eva wanted Derwyn to get her moved in within 24 hours. Derwyn succeeded. Derwyn showed up and came through for people when they needed her. While “Der” was amazing in a pinch, what she loved more was helping others become successful on their own terms. She was amazing at addressing systematic failures of imagination. Although never more anxious than when presenting in public, she inspired her students and audiences to new and useful realizations.

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### Celebration of Life...

Derwyn’s friends, relatives and people who remember her fondly or cherish her legacies are invited to a celebration of the life of (Kathleen) Derwyn Whitbread on Sunday, September 25th, 2022 at the Eva O Howard Theatre — named after Derwyn’s very own Aunt Eva — at the Victoria School for the Arts in downtown Edmonton, Alberta. The celebration begins at 3 pm MST and will be professionally and interactively available live over the internet to accommodate far-flung friends and relatives. The details will be available at <https://derwyn.net>. If you will be attending in person, kindly RSVP at that website so that we can provide sufficient snacks. If you have a photo or a story to share in advance, [derwyn.net](https://derwyn.net) has options.

Barring an early frost, flowers will be provided by AuroraWild.ca, Derwyn’s granddaughter’s flower farm, through Nora Salem, designer, [Bud and Bloom](#) at Kingsway Mall in Edmonton. Derwyn was wildly flower-positive, having curated a home garden that brought regular yearly visitors and admirers. Therefore flower contributions are welcome either through Nora or as desired. (Nora is the one who designs and arranges the flowers that Aurora grows.)

For tax deductible donations, those who are inspired are invited to consider [WINhouse](#) or to help Katherine and Stan start a scholarship through the Victoria School Foundation for the Arts. For those who are inspired to take action to honour Derwyn Whitbread, consider joining the forming Whitbread Village, an Edmonton club for mutual support and aging in place.