



Mary Ann Drake

December 16, 1929 - May 31, 2017

Mary Ann Drake, wife of George F. Drake for almost 60 years, and mother of David F. Drake and Todd Drake, quietly passed away at home on 31 May, 2017.

Mary Ann grew up in Wisconsin but upon completion of her training as an RN she moved to Carmel, California where she worked in the old Carmel Hospital. Her 30-year nursing career saw her pursuing her specialty as a Labor and Delivery nurse in many hospitals in the US and for several years in Manizales, Colombia, where she was one of five registered nurses in a 400-bed hospital. She loved travel and in 1954 spent several months bicycling around Europe. Over the years, either alone or with family, she traveled to many countries, but especially loved travel in Latin America. In her travels, she pursued her interest in hand spinning, weaving and knitting, learning about local natural dyes and traditional weaving techniques from artisans in small villages and native communities. She became an accomplished fiber artist whose work won highest awards in many craft fairs. She became known as the “MAD Hatter” (MAD stood for Mary Ann Drake) and was active in the local Spindrifter and NW Regional Spinning Association.

Upon retiring from nursing at St. Joseph’s Hospital in Bellingham, Mary Ann had the idea to create a small “mom, pop, and developmentally disabled child (David)” plant nursery on property she and her husband owned in the Silver

Beach neighborhood. The plan was to provide a sheltered work environment for disabled youth and thus was created "Big Rock Garden Nursery" which, when purchased by the City of Bellingham twelve years later, became Big Rock Garden Park.

Shortly before her death she received information that the American Azalea Society would be naming one of the Huang Azaleas "Mary Ann Drake". She and her husband introduced to American horticulture this group of over 100 new hybrid azaleas from Shanghai, China in 1982.

A memorial service is being planned for later this summer, featuring Latin American music which Mary Ann loved. Donations in Mary Ann's memory to help fund an annual presentation of traditional folk music of the world in her name in Big Rock Garden Park may be sent to the "Drake Family Fund" at the Whatcom Community Foundation, 1500 Cornwall Ave. Ste. 202, Bellingham, WA 98225.

Tribute Wall

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“ George, I'm so sorry to read this. I enjoyed Mary Ann so much whenever we had time to meet, here or in Bellingham, but especially on our bicycle trip through Europe in the 50's. I visited her when she lived in California. I valued our friendship and will miss her. I found out accidentally while looking you up in order to introduce you to a friend of mine who will be moving to Bellingham in a few weeks.

Virginia Callison Dolan - May 31, 2017 at 12:00 AM

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“ I was so sorry to hear of Mary Ann's passing. I saw her out with George on local trails and despite her infirmities, she was always pleasant, cheerful and seemed to enjoy going out and about. Her life was most impressive and we are all enriched by knowing her and of her accomplishments.

Laura Livingston - May 31, 2017 at 12:00 AM