



Mary Lou Tapson-Jones

Nov. 22, 1922 – April 6, 2009

Mary Louise Tapson-Jones was born on November 27, 1922, in Vernon, BC to Louise and Alex Woods and spent her childhood on the Woods family farm at Canoe Point on Shuswap Lake. The family of five included older brothers Allen and Robert.

The entire family worked hard to make a living off the farm by raising cows, chickens, pigs, growing fruits and vegetables, canning corn and selling cream and butter. All of this was done in a by-gone era of no roads, electricity or running water. Mary Lou's schooling was done through the Ministry of Education's Correspondence program. However, the education that Mary Lou received from her parents left her well versed in literature, music and in particular her greatest love – nature.

In 1950, new neighbors arrived at Canoe Point and Mary Lou was called upon to help nurse the terminally ill wife. A year later, Mary Lou married widower John "Tapson" Tapson-Jones on October 1, 1952 in a simple civil ceremony. Despite the many years difference in their ages, Tapson and Mary Lou had a loving and productive marriage that endured a quarter century. They gardened, traveled, enjoyed music, woodworking and writing. They remained resident on Canoe Point until 1964, when they moved into Salmon Arm to be closer to the medical attention required by Tapson and Mary Lou's aged parents.

The move to Salmon Arm provided Mary Lou with opportunities to join the Salmon Arm Garden Club, Shuswap Naturalists, Haney House Museum, and the Salmon Arm Photo Club.

Her involvement with community led to numerous awards including the Louise Woods Memorial Garden Trophy in 1970, the Federation of BC Naturalists Knowing Nature Award in 1996, the Canada 125 Medal in 1993 for her sharing her knowledge of flora and fauna and her involvement as an environmentalist and naturalist; and the Overwaitea Salute in 1997.

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She was repeatedly honored for her wonderful wild flower photography at the Salmon Arm Fall Fair. In later years, her knowledge of the flora of the area led her to teach through the Salmon Arm Naturalists, Elder Hostel, BC Parks Interpretive program, the spring outdoor education program of the Salmon Arm School District and Haney House Museum. Her greatest thrill was to publish a book "Perilous Charmers; Poisonous Plants of the Pacific Northwest"; this book included many of Mary Lou's magnificent wildflower photos. She also co-authored the first checklist of Wildflowers, Trees & Shrubs of the Shuswap in 1972, reprinted in 1995. Mary Lou would rarely, if ever, cast judgment on others.

She took everyone for who they were at face value and would be supportive of people in whatever endeavor they were involved in. More than that, she took a genuine interest in other people's activities and that kind of interest garnered her many true friends. Mary Lou had a great, if not quirky, sense of humour and was always quick to laugh, especially if she could find a pun. She could come out with some very good lines that would lighten up anyone around her. What a great combination of keen wit and genuine interest in other people, if only we could all be more like Mary Lou Tapson Jones.

Notes by: Sheila Hart and the Woods family, Spring 2009



Mary Lou on a visit to the family farm in the early 1990's
Photo: Marg Shand