



Helen "Duffey" M. Bergren

August 7, 1928 - June 24, 2016

Helen "Duffey" Bergren

8/7/1928 – 6/24/16

Helen M. Bergren "Duffey" was the fourth of five children born to Nancy Margaret Johnson and Joseph C. Duffey, a World War I veteran. According to Helen's older sister, Betty, their mother did not quite make it to the hospital, and Helen was born outside the hospital in the car.

On the one hand, this aversion to hospitals was an ironic start to an individual who would spend so much time in hospitals as an R.N. On the other hand, it suited Helen's wild and adventurous spirit which was the first of many acts to define her full, fascinating, and unconventional life.

The Duffey family lived in Shelton, WA. Helen was a tomboy, preferring to be outside. She started working as a young girl, helping the neighbors with their horses, which began a lifelong love affair with horses. At twelve years of age, she saved up enough money to buy her first horse, "Buck".

Her older sister Betty was Helen's hero. Because Betty was a nurse, Helen resolved to go into nursing. Betty and Helen were close for the eighty-seven years of Helen's life, and Betty took Helen in at one point when the younger sister needed a place to live.

Helen, now "Duffey", a woman in a man's world, got a job working the race tracks to save money for college. She was paid \$1/head, or \$1 for each horse she exercised. If she galloped 30 horses in a day, she made \$30, which was a

good amount of money at the time for a woman to make. There were only two women in the United States at the time working the race tracks.

Duffey went to Arizona and Mexico in the winter to work the tracks and in the summer rode in Colorado, Montana, and Washington state. She rented a room, spent very little money, and saved most of her earnings while working seven days/week. Despite the hard work and the long hours, she loved it. "I would have spent my whole life at it if I hadn't had my ambition."

Duffey went to Central Washington Deaconess in Wenatchee, WA in the nursing program, paying her own way from her savings. She went to WVC (Wenatchee Valley College) simultaneously. In the middle of her education she contracted tuberculosis, which laid her up for a year. At that time TB patients were put in quarantine. Duffey took advantage of this and was enrolled at the University of Washington Seattle, studying from her hospital bed: she acquired a year of college class credits this way.

Duffey graduated from Deaconess with an A.A. and a nursing degree. She passed the R.N. exam and received high marks. She was a member of the "Who's Who in Nursing".

Duffey was offered a job as supervisor at Deaconess upon graduation. She went from student to supervisor in one day. She had many job offers, but decided to accept the supervisory job at Deaconess as she was familiar with the routine.

In 1957 she met Bill Hollingsworth, whom she married shortly thereafter. They had a son Roy who was born and died at six months. On 1/11/60 her second son, Clint, was born. Duffey almost died in childbirth when her doctor insisted upon a natural childbirth. Bill whisked her to Wenatchee Medical Center emergency where a C-section was performed. The doctor at the time said that she would have died had the C-section not been performed.

Bill and Duffey worked with Bill's parents, Slim and Janie Hollingsworth, who were the owners of Icicle Outfitters, which transported customers into the hills on horses for camping trips. Imagine taking people camping for a living! That's what they did.

After five years together, Bill had a logging accident and died in 1962 at 32 years of age from complications of diabetes, leaving a two-year-old son and a young wife behind. The last six months of his life, Bill was mostly bed-ridden and spent as much time as he could with his son.

Alfred "Alf" Bergren, Bill's best friend, married Duffey Hollingsworth on May 23, 1964. Best man at the wedding was Ray Hendrickson and matron-of-honor was Donna Pipkin. Alf remained devoted to both Duffey and Clint until his last breath 5/12/13. Duffey naturally had a difficult time with Bill's tragic death, and Alf, who was very social, helped her to remain connected to life. "Alf was good to me and for me" she said. He was also a good story teller and exuded warmth and kindness.

Duffey then worked for the U.S. Public Health Service for ten years as a "home health nurse". She liked this job a great deal for the autonomy, functioning much as a doctor would, being her own boss, and she even enjoyed the extensive driving. "To like a job is really something," she said. She was never a stranger to work throughout her life.

At one point at Cascade Medical Center, one of the patients went ballistic and three of the nurses were unable to stop him from swinging at everyone.

Despite being a slim 110 pounds, Duffey single-handedly got the attacker in an armlock and forced him to the ground, face first. This may have been when she was offered the Nursing Supervisor position at Cascade Medical Hospital. Duffey was an avid reader, with a particular love of thrillers and mysteries. She loved all the Dick Francis books (racetrack mysteries) and the "Cat Who" books. She had a way with animals and her pets were very dear to her: her horse Flower Power, her cats Princess and Pixie, and her spaniels Cricket and Rosie.

The last day, the last hour before his retirement, her husband Alf had a logging accident which broke his back and ruptured his spleen. When he shocked the medical staff and lived, he was then told he would not walk. He walked with a cane and lived thirty more years until 5/12/13. Duffey stood by

his side after the accident, utilizing her nursing skills to take excellent care of Alf.

When Duffey retired from her nursing career, she had something of an identity crisis, having been career-minded all her life. Geri Watson, twenty years her junior, was able to keep up with her (and vice versa!) and they began riding into the high country together. “Her stamina and endurance was amazing”, Geri said. In the process, Geri helped Duffey recapture her “cowgirl tough” identity which she had known during her racing days. Duffey spent many happy hours with Geri, going on trail rides as much as twenty-six miles in a day until she was seventy years of age. They both had a “let’s go see around the next bend” attitude, and once they returned so late that their husbands went looking for them. Among other destinations, Duffey and Geri rode to Square and Wolverine Lakes, Lorraine Lake, Cuiltin Lake and Turquoise Lake. Duffey “loved the Lady Lakes”: Margaret, Mary, and Florence.

Soon after retirement, Duffey developed breast cancer, which she overcame, as she did every other challenge in her life.

When Alf died 5/12/13, this was a very difficult time for Duffey. They had just entered Mountain Meadows Assisted Living some three weeks prior. She did pull through, however, and was always ready to go on any field trip (Fish Lake, Smallwoods, Lake Wenatchee) or to visit her son, who took her on many long drives. Duffey knew that her short-term memory was failing her, but she continued to read her newspapers and was an interesting, intelligent, and delightful conversationalist to the very end.

Duffey had a very special companion/caregiver, Paula Enesco, with a heart of gold, who truly loved Duffey. Paula took Duffey on many excursions. Duffey had always been a “girl on the go”, which aging did nothing to slow down. Other special caregivers, among many, were Mindy, Laura, Damita, Mars, Sunny, Christine, Sue, and Francis. She was well loved at Mountain Meadows, where the staff made the last three years of her life both healthy and happy, as did her wonderful doctor, Dr. Jay Jerome.

Survivors include her son, Clint Hollingsworth (Suzie), her sister Betty

Costello, and her nephew Carl Bunge. She is predeceased by her husbands Alfred Bergren and Bill Hollingsworth, her son Roy, her niece Patricia, and her brothers Howard, Warren, and Joe.

Helen "Duffey" Bergren was an adventuress: reckless, wild, and up for any challenge. She had a fascinating and unique life. Her life would be unique among men but was extremely unique among women. Qualities which set her apart were her strength, courage, intelligence, energy, ethics, determination, generosity, and perseverance.

Duffey truly was "Cowgirl tough"! We'll miss you, lady. But sometimes, when the clouds are just right, we can see that cowgirl kicking dust across the sky, wild and free, just as she lived her life.

You're riding in the high country now.

A "Celebration of Life", will be held at Mountain Meadows Assisted Living, 320 Park Ave, Leavenworth, WA 98826 on Saturday, July 16, 2016 from 3-5 p.m. Food and beverages will be served. Please express your thoughts and memories on the online guest book at jonesjonesbetts.com. Arrangements are by Jones & Jones – Betts Funeral Home.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life Service

JUL 16. 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM (PT)

Mountain Meadows Assisted Living
320 Park Ave
Leavenworth, WA 98826

Tribute Wall



“ Jones & Jones - Betts Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Helen "Duffey" M. Bergren



Jones & Jones~Betts Funeral Home - July 11, 2016 at 03:04 PM