

Cardiff resident Diana Gurley celebrates her 90th birthday



By **Mike Riley**

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Dozens of family members, friends and well-wishers flocked to the Cardiff Community Centre in Cardiff throughout the afternoon of Oct. 14 to celebrate the 90th birthday of Diana Theresa Bayne Gurley, who has lived in the area full-time at her cottage called Hacienda on Baptiste Lake since she retired in 1994.

Gurley is well known throughout the area, having been past president of the Art Gallery of Bancroft (which she still volunteers with) and past president of the Lake Baptiste Association. She has five children; Deborra, Malcolm, Roslyn, Christine and Eleanor, 13 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren. Sadly, her husband Malcolm passed away in 2001, after 47 years of marriage.

Originally hailing from Venezuela, Gurley's family lived in Trinidad, Florida and Jamaica, before coming to Canada in 1967. From her speech about her mom on Oct. 14, Deborrah said that Gurley always wants to help and be supportive to her family through good times and bad.

?She is truly a loving, courageous and energetic role model for her family. Her spirit remains young at heart,? she says.

An avid artist, first in oils, now in acrylic and watercolours, Gurley developed her skills at high school in Florida, later taking painting lessons at The Jamaica School of Art, being personally mentored by Jamaican artist Barry Watson. She later gave art lessons after the family moved to Canada, in exchange for dance and acrobatic lessons for her children. A member of the Willowdale Group of Artists, giving weekly painting sessions and annual art shows. She still teaches art lessons to a few local friends and to anybody visiting Hacienda who asks.

Gurley is also very involved with the Catholic church and helps organize fundraisers and donates to various causes and charities. She recently repainted a statue of Mary for St. Mary's church in Apsley and also donated one of her paintings to a fundraising auction for Our Lady of Lourdes parish.

Gurley worked for many years as a clerk at the Hugh MacMillan Rehabilitation Centre, and eventually retired at the director of human resources in 1994.

In addition to her other interests, Gurley enjoys gardening, swimming, fishing, and cheering on the Toronto Blue Jays.

On Oct. 14 at the Cardiff Community Centre, her son Malcolm said that the party was going really well. In addition to the lunch and the birthday cake, there had been a number of speeches from the different generations there to celebrate. He said that cottage life at Hacienda had kept his mom young at heart and active, and that she is in great shape for a 90-year-old, having her last swim of the season on Oct. 4.

‘There’s a lot of coordination getting the community centre and the permit and all that. We have people from all over, from Ottawa, Gatineau, Kitchener-Waterloo, a couple of people from Germany on Zoom, and then a lot of locals too. There’s a lot of people she knows that are here,’ he says.

Gurley said the whole day had been wonderful, and was an opportunity to have her whole family there with her.

‘Each one of my grandchildren has written a message for me and put it on our family tree [on the wall of the community centre]. And of course, a lot of the people here are from the [Baptiste] Lake Association, the [Bancroft] Art Gallery, my church, and old friends that I grew up with,’ she says.

After lighting the candles on Gurley’s cake, the whole room full of friends and family sang ‘Happy Birthday’ to her, and then she made a ceremonial cut in the cake. After that, her children invited her to come up to the front of the room to give her present to her, which was from the whole family; a ticket down to Florida to continue her birthday celebration with her family and friends down in the sunshine state. She then said a few words to everyone present;

‘What does a 90-year-old woman have to say today? Hooray. Thank you, Lord for this wonderful blessing to live for 90 years with my beautiful family, with all my friends, with all the wonderful things that have happened in my life. I have so much to be thankful for. I thank you for your friendship, I thank my children for putting this all together, I thank all my grandchildren for their performances,’ she says.

Gurley also thanked her friends who stood by her all these years and helped her after her husband Malcolm died. She said that everybody rallied around when she decided to live at Hacienda alone but it wasn’t really alone because there were always family and friends there.

‘Thank you everyone for coming. I know some of you came from far away. I’m so grateful. I thank you because it means a lot to me to know that you care. You care for your families; you care for your friends. You care for all those that are dear to you as I do. And I thank God for the mercies of having good health and may I be able to continue to carry on as best I can and I know that with your support that will be much better. Thank you to my children and grandchildren. If I’ve missed anyone, I thank you all and ask you to continue keeping in touch everyone. It’s a blessing and thank you for celebrating with me,’ she says. ‘God bless!’