

# Barbara Forbes-A Caring Spirit in our UCE Family

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## The Early Days

Barbara Isabel Forbes was born in Red Deer, Alberta on January 14, 1935. Her parents were Elzy McDonald (Don) Bevington (1908) and Mary Thelma Forbes (1913). Barbara was the eldest of three, followed by brother Alan, and sister Joyce.

From age 6 to 12 years, Barb attended the one room school of Northview in the Winterburn area, west of Edmonton. She walked one mile to school across the fields until the snow was too deep and then she took the longer way via the railway tracks. She liked school, and when her grandfather sold the farm, they moved into the city, where a teacher informed her parents that she had university potential. The family stayed in the city for three years, but her father was distressed by city life and they soon returned to the Secord farm in Winterburn where her father was herdsman for the dairy herd.

## Travel Bug is Planted

In 1952, when Barb was in the 12th grade, she was honoured by the school and supported by the community to attend the coronation of Queen Elizabeth. She travelled across Canada by train and steamship across the Atlantic to spend six weeks in England and Scotland. This experience was an eye opening, mind expanding experience for an 18 year old who had never been out of Alberta. She met youth from all over the British Commonwealth and was exposed to history, art, music, architecture and special coronation events. She recounts this as one of the highlights of her young life.



## Family Memories

Barb has many fond memories of her youth on the farm. Saskatoon berry picking was a fun family event during the summers. She always looked forward to extended family gatherings when aunts, uncles and cousins would come out to the farm to help harvest their

huge garden, or at Easter to roll coloured eggs down the barn yard hill. In winter, a tradition was to build a big bonfire and skate on Big Lake. Her favorite memory is of gliding with big strides with her Aunty Glen across the lake, outskating the crackling ice around them. Each summer, the family would pack up their 1926 Pontiac and head to Alberta Beach on July 1st for a big extended family gathering. This is something they still do today, though with a newer car!

## Education and Career

Barb went to the U of Alberta for 4 years, graduating with an Honors B.A. in Psychology in 1958. She worked as a psychologist in the Child Guidance Clinic of Alberta for 6 years. Barb married Alfred Barry Harrison and they had three children: Jeffery, Rhian and Scott. She was a stay at home mom for 13 years. It was during these child rearing years that Barb became aware of the lack of child group activities for pre-school children and kindergarten options. So began Barb's social action efforts which resulted in the "Happy Place Play School" which operated out of the Robertson Wesley United Church and a community kindergarten at Glenora Elementary school.

Barb went back to university and completed a social work degree in 1975 and worked as a medical social worker at the Misericordia Hospital in Edmonton for six years.

## A rich family time with Rhian, Scott and grandchildren

Her marriage ended in divorce and she married Ernst Martin Gumpert. They spent a year travelling in Europe and on their return, Barb became certified in Bioenergetics and began private practice until she retired in 1998. In her early retirement, Ernst and Barb spent 4 months at the Yasodhara Ashram in B.C. and spent several winters in Arizona, skied in Jasper and Banff, and travelled in the U.S. visiting Ernst's family on both the east and west coasts, until Ernst died in 2007.

Ernst cherished the role of grandfather and enjoyed Barb's daughter Rhian, granddaughter Brooklyn and son Scott and his girls, Sabrina and Corrina. Barb recalls these years together as a family as rich and meaningful ones.



## Life with Horst

Following Ernst's death, life was feeling very bleak, until Barb met Horst Konrad, who lost his wife a short year earlier. They began walking together as Barb was recovering from a

knee injury and needed some support. This friendship developed into a romance and they have been together happily for over eight years.

## Something you may not know about Barb

For the past eight years, Barb has made weekly visits to a friend at the Lynnwood Extended Care Centre. This friend has multiple sclerosis and is almost completely paralyzed. She loves to play scrabble and Barb assists her to play on her weekly visits. This friendship has given Barb an appreciation of her own life-long good health.

## Unitarian Church



Barb's eldest son, Jeffrey, attended the Montessori nursery school in the basement of the former Unitarian church and it is there that she and Barry decided to become members of the church. Both had previous experience with the United Church but were searching for a new spiritual home.

Barb has been a member of the Unitarian Church since 1971. Her children attended the church school, and her son Scott currently attends with his partner Karen. His daughters, Sabrina and Corrina, attended the church school in years past, where Barb played an active role. The Unitarian Church of Edmonton is a meaningful part of her life and she attends services weekly. Barb has been active in the church in a variety of roles including membership on the Ministerial Committee and the church choir, Choreal. She has volunteered for numerous tasks including greeting, ushering, luncheons, gardening, Ministerial Committee, church school and Blue Christmas. The Church's focus on social justice is very important to Barb as that has been a focus that has guided her throughout her life.

Barb is optimistic about the future of the world and sees evidence around her that we will survive and thrive as a species. It is very meaningful to Barb that the church encourages exploration of issues, supports thinking outside the box and sees beyond the strictures of traditional doctrines and dogma.

## Yoga on and off the mat

Yoga continues to be a very important part of Barb's life. She began classes at the YWCA in 1967 at a "Mother's Day Out" program and has been involved with yoga ever since that time, exploring alternatives until she found the approach that suited her best. She spent four months at the Yasodhara Ashram in B.C. when she retired, and has also been to India twice to study with Swami Veda Bharati. She now attends regular classes and retreats in Edmonton and has a daily personal hatha and meditation practice.

Barb acknowledges a personal need for a deeper connection with God at a level of the individual and the universe. Her spiritual journey continues with her studies, reflections, yogic practice and meditation providing the grace to seek the Light within.

The importance of family, social justice, giving to the world and personal exploration are fundamental values of this caring and modest Unitarian in our midst. Our UCE vision of searching, learning, connecting and serving are animated through Barb's gifts to her family, community and the world.