



Phyllis Jagusiak

JUN 28, 1927 - DEC 20, 2019



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OAKLAND

Funeral, Cemetery
& Cremation Services

Table of Contents

Obituary	Page 3
Events	Page 6



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Phyllis Packer surprised her parents when she arrived earlier than planned on June 28, 1927. Her parents, Leon and Lois Packer, had been traveling from Albion in western New York to Albany, but had to make an unplanned stop at the hospital in Auburn, New York to welcome their daughter into this world.

Four years later, Phyllis was joined by a younger brother, Albert. The family was living in Trumansburg, New York where Leon was a teacher at the local high school. In 1934, when Phyllis was about seven, her parents bought a farm in Interlaken, a short distance from Trumansburg. Phyllis and Al grew up helping their parents grow apples, raise chickens and sell milk from the herd of almost 20 dairy cows.

In 1940, Phyllis was baptized at the First Baptist Church in Trumansburg, New York. Her faith remained strong throughout her life. Phyllis graduated from Interlaken high school in 1944 and chose to follow her Aunt Bertha into the nursing profession. She completed two years of liberal arts prerequisites at Cornell University's College of Home Economics in Ithaca, before continuing to Cornell University-New York Hospital School of Nursing in Manhattan to complete her Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. Phyllis was one of 27 graduates from the original class of 36.

After graduation, Phyllis worked as a registered nurse in New York and Maryland. In 1963, seeking some adventure and change, Phyllis traveled with her cousin Judy Cline from New York to California in her Volkswagen Beetle. They stopped to visit family and friends along the way including her brother Albert and his six kids in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Jane Mordhorst, one of her nursing classmates, in Colorado. Phyllis and Judy settled in the San Francisco Bay area living first in Oakland and then later in Berkeley. Phyllis worked both as a public health care nurse and as a school nurse during her time in California.

In 1969, Phyllis left on another adventure – traveling around Western Europe for eight months. Along the way, she had a chance to visit Warsaw, Poland thanks to the Pabjanek family who she



Obituary

Phyllis Jagusiak

JUN 28, 1927 - DEC 20, 2019

had met and become friends with through her nursing duties in the Bay Area. In Poland, Phyllis met, through another friend, a man named Ryszard Jagusiak. Ryszard introduced her to the history, art and culture of Poland, as well as the early summer beauty of the Polish countryside. Phyllis traveled to the town of Jelonki to meet his family. Communication was accomplished by phrase books.

Phyllis returned to the San Francisco Bay Area where she continued to live and worked as a nurse. In 1971, Phyllis successfully invited Ryszard to visit California – not a simple task as Poland was ‘behind the iron curtain’ at the time. Ryszard decided to stay in the United States, and he and Phyllis were married on July 31, 1971. They settled in an apartment in Berkeley. While Ryszard began English classes and found a job through a fellow Pole, Phyllis continued working as a nurse. Phyllis and Ryszard moved into their present home on Monterey Avenue in Berkeley, in 1976.

At every chance, Phyllis and Ryszard went camping and explored California, the Northwest, the Rockies, the Southwest, and the edges of Mexico and Canada. They drove across the United States from California to New York. They flew back to Poland a number of times after 1989. After both retired in the early 1990’s, they got a mini-truck with a pop-up camper on top, and continued visiting the beautiful places of the west.

Phyllis and Ryszard attended mass every week at St. Joseph the Worker in the Diocese of Oakland. On April 19, 2003, Phyllis converted to Catholicism making her solemn profession of faith in the Roman Catholic Church. Phyllis and Ryszard also renewed their vows at St. Joseph the Worker on May 4, 2004.

Although they never had kids of their own, Phyllis often talked of her nieces and nephews: Rick, Michael, Bryan, Danny, Nancy and Carol. Phyllis was also very close with her cousins and their children. Her cousin Mary Ann’s son, Gordon, lived south in San Jose and would visit with his sons Evan and Alex. Her cousin Judy’s son, Luis, lived north in the California wine region.

By the 2010s, Phyllis and Ryszard were living quietly in their house in Berkeley. Phyllis was slowed down by arthritis and heart disease, but she and Ryszard still walked from a quarter of a mile to a mile most days down at the Berkeley marina. Trips to the doctors and Meals on Wheels took over their days. They both reluctantly gave up driving. In December 2017, Ryszard required care that Phyllis could no longer provide at home. He entered an excellent assisted living



Obituary

Phyllis Jagusiak

JUN 28, 1927 - DEC 20, 2019


program in Oakland where he received loving and expert care. He passed away quietly and peacefully on the eve of Palm Sunday, March 24, 2018, at the age of ninety-four and a half.

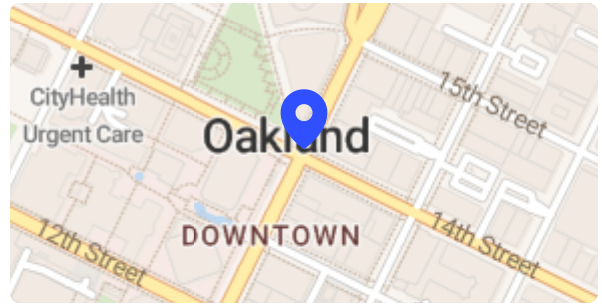
The house in Berkeley was now more than Phyllis could handle by herself. After over 40 years, Phyllis said goodbye to her Berkeley neighbors and, in her words, began her transition to a new life. Phyllis moved into a one room apartment in Mercy Retirement & Care Center in Oakland. She described it as a ‘solo journey into a community of elders.’ She loved the view from

her room of large pine trees which reminded her of growing up in New York. She enjoyed staring mesmerized at the swaying trees. Her list of priorities when she moved in included “stare mesmerized at the swaying trees, find an orchid whisperer, make friends with the dog personalities who reside here” (as several residents had dogs). She spent her days making friends and trying to organizer her small space. She also began writing poems, a creative outlet which gave her a lot of joy. Unfortunately, her heart was growing tired and after a fall that forced a move from the assisted living to the care side of Mercy, Phyllis’s health continued to deteriorate. On December 18, Phyllis was placed under hospice care. She looked whatever came next as a ‘learning opportunity’. On December 19, she received last rites from Fr. Jan Rudzewicz. Early the next morning, December 20, 2019, Phyllis passed away quietly in her sleep. She had ‘moved up’ as they say at Mercy. In her words, she was journeying toward a light shrouded in mystery. She was completing her ‘transition of all transitions’ toward a three-fold vision of an infinite being and infinite love.



Cemetery Details

 **Cathedral of Christ the Light**
Oakland CA





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