

Joyce Elizabeth Dunphy

Sept. 6, 1926 – Oct. 26, 2017

Joyce Elizabeth Dunphy was one of four children born to Louis and Elizabeth Kulak. As a child growing up in Woodbend, near Edmonton, Alberta, Joyce's parents would find their somewhat wilful daughter suspended from a tree limb rather than sitting quietly doing her homework. The outdoors were a tantalizing draw to Joyce, who viewed idleness as a threat to her independence.



Joyce eventually stopped climbing trees and obtained a teaching degree from an Edmonton university. She was never sure why she chose that occupation—perhaps job security was the attraction. There were so few teachers during the late 1940s that Joyce, at a very young age, was almost conscripted into her first job. Her local teaching career began in Falun, then Thorsby, in central Alberta, but it was the year 1950 that stamped the biggest impression on her life. Joyce went north to Yellowknife to be a bridesmaid for her good friend. What was meant to be a short, exciting stay in the bustling gold-mine town sparked something more profound and long-term for the young woman. The North had tossed a baited line to Joyce's adventuresome spirit and she was hooked. She gave notice at her current position, convinced her parents that she would survive in a northern frontier town, packed a few bags, and returned to Yellowknife within months. Her second teaching career began as soon as she landed.

She found love not long after her move, and married "Duffy," a pipefitter for Giant Mines. Then a second love affair began in 1957; a passion for flying. Joyce took lessons, acquired her private license, and bought a Cessna 170 (CF-HJD). "I never flew to nearby lakes to catch fish really... just to listen to the loons." Every summer, lakes such as Defeat, Plant, Hidden, and Sparrow Lake all felt the touch of HJD's floats.

More at home listening to the stories and adventures of pilots and engineers, Joyce's commitment to teaching waned as her interest in the aviation world expanded. She went from flying

HJD on weekends to dispatching flights across the Northwest Territories for Northward Aviation, Ptarmigan Airways, and Raecom Air. At all her posts, Joyce was well-respected (and perhaps a little feared!) for her professionalism, principles, dependability, directness, and her loyal and trustworthy character. Happiest at the controls of an airplane or arranging flights and ensuring the invoicing was correct, Joyce modelled a work and life ethic that is rare today.

Joyce ended her professional career by working for the Government of the Northwest Territories booking flights across the Arctic for the government's many employees. At 67, she retired and moved south to be near her family in Spruce Grove. The distance from the North unsettled her initially, and she never felt quite at home as she had in Yellowknife. She returned home often, invited to the Float Plane Fly-Ins.

Joyce wasn't all seriousness and hard work. She was joyful and fun, and participated annually in the airlines' freeze-up parties. While she enjoyed sports, particularly curling, baseball, and bowling, flying was her first and last passion.

The aviation world, in particular some of the older bush pilots and engineers, and Joyce's former students and longtime friends, will all agree that Joyce was a special gal whose camaraderie and spirit were appreciated, and will now be missed.

Why move north at such a young age?

"The North gave me the freedom to be myself."