
Kate Stevens(August 04, 1927 - April 30, 2016)



Dr. Kate Stevens was born in Boston and grew up in Brookline Massachusetts. She spent many happy summers at Tiverton, Rhode Island with her sister, brother and cousins. They lived on a farm which had been in the family for 13 generations. These were idyllic summers of wandering the woods, picking berries, looking for birds and swimming in the ocean, all of which no doubt contributed to Kate's long lasting love of nature and the outdoors.

Although she originally studied Physics (at a time when that was a very non-traditional area of study for women) she came to realize that Physics was not the field in which she was most interested. Inspired by Ezra Pound's translation of Confucian classics, Kate started teaching herself Chinese in her spare time. In Kate's words: "It was wisdom and fun; physics was abandoned".

In the course of her academic career she attended Smith College, [University of Minnesota](#), Columbia University, and [Yale University](#), where she received the two Ford Foundation Grants which enabled her to go to Taiwan to study traditional Chinese performance art and storytelling, becoming perfectly fluent in Chinese. She received her PhD in Chinese Studies at Harvard and became a professor of Chinese Literature at the University of Toronto in 1966. There she taught and inspired many students.

While at the University of Toronto, Kate made several research trips to China to study with and record some of China's superb singer-tellers. She also studied at the Storytellers School of Toronto and joined 1001 Friday Nights of Storytelling.

Upon retirement in 1986, Kate's love of the ocean and the wilderness brought her to Victoria where she was able to devote herself to gardening, birding and supporting many environmental causes. She was a longtime supporter of Wildwood, the sustainable forestry project near Ladysmith BC.

But story-telling became her main focus and Kate became one of Victoria's best -known storytellers. She was the first to receive a Lifetime Membership in the Victoria Storytellers Guild. Her Chinese clapper tales were described as "mesmerizing" and she is credited with expanding the group's storytelling horizons by bringing fascinating national and international story-tellers to Victoria to give workshops and performances.

Kate also had a national reputation as a storyteller and was the first to be chosen for the Storytellers of Canada-Conteurs du Canada StorySave project, which records the stories of our elders.

Kate's last years were spent quietly at Parkwood Court. She is survived by her sister Elizabeth (Betty) Richardson and her family, her brother William (Bill) Stevens Jr and his family, and her many friends in the Victoria area, across Canada, and around the world.

Funeral Home

First Memorial Funeral Services - Victoria

1155 Fort Street Victoria, BC V8V3K9
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