



THE CAPITAL AND VANCOUVER ISLAND

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OBITUARY: DONNA MASSE

Military veteran was first woman to carry ceremonial mace out of legislature

JEFF BELL
Times Colonist

Donna Masse was a trailblazer, including being the first woman to carry the ceremonial mace out of the legislature, in 2001.

The usual carrier of the mace, the sergeant-at-arms, was unavailable after a sitting was adjourned, so the responsibility shifted to Masse in her role as chamber supervisor.

Masse held the mace, which weighs five kilograms and is plated with 24-carat gold, as she led the speaker's procession from the chamber — and made parliamentary history.

It was a great honour for her, said daughter Anna Peakman. "She was really proud of some of the barriers that she broke."

Peakman said her mother, who died Jan. 10 at the age of 85, had become part of the legislature's staff after retiring from a military career.

She had joined the armed forces after Peakman was born, and quickly rose through the ranks to earn another first for a woman — becoming the commanding officer of the 700-member Communications Squadron at CFB Borden, near Barrie, Ont.

For her mother, being a woman in a traditional male job was about stepping up and doing the work, Peakman said.

"Her mindset was: 'It's not about being a woman in the workplace, it's about being the best in the workplace,'" she said. "That was her attitude — you can whine about this or you can just shut up and be the best and get on with it."

Peakman said the family moved to Vancouver Island when her father, Guy — also a commanding officer — put in for a



Donna Masse, who died Jan. 10 at the age of 85, had become part of the legislature's staff after retiring from a military career.

transfer, seeking a better climate for his health.

Masse also asked for an Island posting but was turned down, so she decided to leave the military, at least for a while.

Just 18 months after the move, Guy Masse died and Donna Masse became a widow at 44 with two teenage daughters.

She returned to school to finish her business administration degree and went to work for the provincial government, but she wasn't done with the military yet.

"They were looking for female officers, so she was recommis-

sioned to work in Vancouver," Peakman said.

Masse became a security officer and commuted to Vancouver so her daughters could keep going to school in Victoria.

Peakman remembers one of her investigations involving a tank running over a cadet during training manoeuvres. "It was so rainy and muddy, the tank squished him into the mud but he was otherwise unhurt."

Masse retired from the military in 1993, but took on several jobs after that "just to keep her-



Donna and Guy Masse moved to the Island 40 years ago.

PHOTOS VIA ANNA PEAKMAN

self busy," Peakman said.

Peakman said her mother viewed every job "as another opportunity to connect with different people."

"She loved creating an extensive community and having purpose."

Working as a cashier was one of the jobs that allowed her to do just that, Peakman said.

"Some of her most fond memories were customers' kids asking for a hug."

Masse then signed on with the legislature staff, which typically includes retired military person-

nel, and went on to earn the job that would lead to carrying the mace.

That work was a part of Masse's life until she was 78; she also kept active in the Catholic Women's League through the military parish.

Masse had five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. She was predeceased by her daughter Renee Attwood.

A celebration of life will be held at 2 p.m. on Feb. 2 at the Our Lady Star of the Sea Chapel, 585 Galiano Cres. jbell@timescolonist.com

New funding allows View Royal recovery centre to offer beds for women

ROXANNE EGAN-ELLIOTT
Times Colonist

Women in need of a long-term program to recover from substance use will soon have an option to stay on the Island.

The province announced funding Thursday for 20 beds for women in Our Place Society's New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community in View Royal.

The facility, a former youth detention centre, currently has 47 beds for men recovering from substance use who take part in a nine- to 24-month program.

The new funding will allow Our Place to renovate the space to add 20 beds for women and operate a program based on the existing model that will be entirely separate from the men, said Cheryl Diebel, who is the director of the current program and will also be the director of the women's program.

It will be the first long-term recovery option for women on the Island, she said, and is expected to open at the end of this summer.

People taking part in the program have complex struggles with addiction and need more support to recover than a shorter 30- to 90-day program can offer, Diebel said.

Women in need of a long-term program currently have to go to the mainland for treatment, uprooting them from their communities and making it more difficult to transition back after treatment, Diebel said.

The therapeutic program focuses on connecting people with the wider community through educational opportunities and employment, Diebel said, and some men begin working while completing the program. About a dozen men from the program have gone on to work at Our Place in maintenance and as housing support workers, she said.

People in the program can take their Grade 12 equivalency, take part in therapy, learn how to care for their health, learn to regulate their emotions and integrate back into society without the need for substances.



Director Cheryl Diebel at Our Place Society's New Roads Therapeutic Recovery Community in View Royal. The province announced funding Thursday for 20 beds exclusively for women at the facility.

DARREN STONE, TIMES COLONIST

To participate in the program, people must be 19 or older, have moderate to severe substance use and be highly motivated to change their lives, committing to up to two years of treatment.

About 35 to 50 per cent of the men at New Roads have come out of the criminal justice system, Diebel said.

The women's community will have slightly different programming, with a stronger focus on family therapy, family reunification and intimate-partner violence, she said.

The province also announced funding for an additional 160 treatment and recovery beds across B.C. to improve access to treatment closer to home.

"People need to be able to access treatment and recovery services close to where they live, without worrying about how to pay for it," Premier David Eby said in a statement. About 100 beds are already available, and the rest are expected to be ready later this year.

The amount of funding for the New Roads women's program

has not yet been finalized, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions said.

The funding comes from a \$73-million investment over three years to increase access to free treatment and recovery services for people with addiction. The province is also extending funding provided in 2020 for 105 existing beds to the end of 2027.

In the fall, the province committed \$4.39 million to New Roads to support the program. regan-elliott@timescolonist.com

Tribunal rejects \$3,000 claim against B.C. Ferries for motorcycle that fell over

JEREMY HAINSWORTH
Glacier Media

A B.C. man won't be getting \$3,000 from B.C. Ferries, money he claimed the corporation owed him after his motorcycle fell over during a sailing.

Toshman Mah told B.C. Civil Resolution Tribunal member Kristin Gardner his motorcycle was damaged when it fell over on May 26, 2023. He said B.C. Ferries failed to secure his motorcycle and is responsible for repair costs.

Mah said he parked where B.C. Ferries staff instructed him to, and was then told by staff to move upstairs to the

ferry's passenger lounge area.

About an hour into the sailing, Mah's motorcycle tipped over.

Mah said B.C. Ferries was responsible for the damage because its staff failed to place any blocks to stabilize the bike.

But B.C. Ferries denied any negligence, saying vehicle owners are responsible for properly securing their vehicles on the ferry. The company said it was Mah's own negligence that caused any damage, pointing to signs on board the ferry that state riders must park and secure their motorcycles "entirely at their own risk."

B.C. Ferries provided a photo

of the relevant sign, which has instructions about how to park motorcycles, including that they be parked at 45 degrees to the ferry's centre line, left in low gear, parked on the side stand, and blocked on the opposite side with available wooden blocks.

Staff had instructed Mah to park his motorcycle in a different area, which B.C. Ferries says is commonly used for motorcycles, particularly when the motorcycle zone is full.

Mah said he didn't see any signs indicating how to block motorcycles, and that B.C. Ferries did not provide him with any blocks.

"I find it is possible Mr. Mah did not see the sign or the available blocks given where B.C. Ferries instructed him to park," Gardner said.

The tribunal agreed with B.C. Ferries that Mah should have known he was responsible for ensuring his motorcycle was properly secured.

Gardner said Mah should not have left his motorcycle without confirming how to properly secure it.

"I find it was unreasonable for Mr. Mah to expect B.C. Ferries would be responsible for blocking the wheels of his motorcycle," Gardner said. "It should have been obvious that

Mr. Mah was on a moving vessel, subject to turns, potential bumps when leaving and arriving at the dock, and rough waters."

Gardner said B.C. Ferries does have a duty of care to provide drivers with a safe location to park their vehicles on the ferry, including a duty to provide wheel blocks to secure motorcycles.

"However, I find its duty of care does not extend to ensuring motorcycles are properly secured. I find that duty belongs to the motorcycle driver, in this case, Mr. Mah," she said. "For that reason, I find Mr. Mah has not established B.C. Ferries was negligent."