

## She played the cards she was dealt, and won!

Wynne (Winifred Mary) Taylor, 1923-08-01 to 2013-08-14, by Richard Taylor 2013-08-19



As all of her family will attest, Mum loved playing cards, especially double rummy. She taught us all how to play, and while we were in training, of course she'd let us win. But once we were hooked, she let her real skill show through and she was a formidable player. It certainly wasn't just luck - she would take whatever hand she was dealt and she would win.

Life dealt Wynne some pretty miserable hands: she was born into a very poor family that became even poorer in the 1930s when her father died and her mother with two young girls had to move in with an aunt. England was then a very class-conscious society, and it was very hard for working-class people to get ahead. Wynne made the most of what opportunities she had and by her early twenties, she had become a talented and well-rounded young lady. She had won prizes for her school work, she had a good job, she was active in a local theatre group and she regularly attended musical concerts. From the memories that persisted until the end, I think she was very happy with that part of her life. She played those cards very well.



In the 1950s and 60s, as was expected at the time, she became a supportive wife and mother. Many years later, I gradually discovered that Mum didn't exactly like this hand she'd been dealt. But at the time, she threw herself into what she was doing and successfully supported her husband through the difficult time of establishing our family in a new country and navigating his convoluted career as an accountant.

Dad may have been in charge of the corporate accounts, but Mum was the one who made sure the household accounts were in order. As our mother, I think she did a fabulous job. She was always there to help us with our interests and hobbies from rock collecting to astronomy, and she also taught all three of us how to knit, sew, embroider and cook. Another hand to Mum!





In the 1970's, with her husband established, and sadly, soon gone, and her children launched, Wynne finally could ask herself, "What do I want to do?" Her first answer came as a bit of a surprise to us: she wanted to do some wood carving. She signed up for a course at St. Lawrence College in carving decoys. Now I don't think Wynne really wanted to carve duck decoys, but that was what the instructor told all his students to begin with. So she went at it with her usual diligence and attention to detail, carving and painting the best wooden duck she could. Here it is. One of the most lifelike wooden ducks the instructor had seen, and certainly one of the best "first attempts"! Wynne went on to carve and paint many other birds and butterflies, including her magnificent magpie, but I have a certain fondness for this duck. She took that hand and triumphed.

There's another similar example that hangs on our living room wall. After painting wooden birds, Mum went on to take courses from Henry Vyfvinkel in watercolour painting. Mum's style was very detailed and realistic - quite a contrast to Vyfvinkel's quick, broad-brush approach. At one point, the students had been doing a series of studies of sunflowers, painting them in various styles. Of course Mum spent ages getting every petal, floret and colour exactly right, and I expect Vyfvinkel found this a bit tiresome. So he told her that her next picture had to be bold, impressionistic and NOT realistic. Mum told me she found this a very difficult assignment - well out of her comfort zone. But she took the hand she was dealt, and just LOOK at the result. You won't find another piece of Mum's work like this; it's not at all her usual style, but it's fabulous! When I saw it, I immediately asked her for it.



In 2009, life dealt Wynne a very cruel hand. A stroke on the right side of her brain stole her art, her crafts and even her crossword puzzles. She couldn't cope on her own anymore and she moved to Sherwood Park Manor. It was a rough four years, but as I went around the Manor last week, saying good-bye and thank you to all the staff who had cared for her, I heard again and again how much she touched people's hearts, how they loved her jokes and stories and how much they would miss her. She played her last hand well. Hearts were always her strong suit.