

Walter Goresky Biography information for the Goresky reunion 2016

Walter Goresky was born in Smoky Lake, Alberta on June 26, 1927. He was the oldest son of Isadore and Anne (Paley) Goresky and their second child. At this time, Isadore was the principal of the Smoky Lake School.

Walter's father, Isadore, was born in Barbiivtsi, Ukraine in 1902. He moved with his family when he was 3, settling in Stonewall, Manitoba. He did his schooling in Stonewall and became interested in teaching. He started his teaching career in a school in Rosa, Manitoba when he was 15. This is where he met and eventually married Anne Paley. After several years, and a degree in teaching, Isadore became Principal of the Smoky Lake school. It was at this time in Smoky Lake that Walt was born.

As Walt was growing up, the family made several moves following his father's career development. The career choice Walt made – becoming a medical Dr. – was influenced a good deal by his Uncle Victor Goresky who was a Dr. in Castlegar, B.C. When graduating from High School in Edmonton, Walt won a 3 year scholarship to University of Alberta where he chose to study medicine. Upon graduation in Medicine in 1950, Walt married his first wife , Dorothy Simpson , a classmate . They moved to Regina where he interned at Regina General Hospital.

Walt and Dorothy had 3 children, Mark, Lynne and Leslie. This was during the period Walt was continuing his medical studies and working for 5 years in a medical practice in Neudorf, Saskatchewan.

After spending five years in this medical practice, Walt decided he wanted further training specializing in Psychiatry. He was accepted to train in Psychiatry at the Menninger Foundation in Topeka, Kansas. The family moved to Topeka in 1955. This is where their 4th child Brenda (now Soma) was born.

Psychiatry became a passionate interest and determined the rest of Walt's career path. On graduating in 1958, Walt and the family moved to Vancouver on the west coast. This was an area that had always impressed Walt. He became a staff psychiatrist at Shaughnessy Hospital, eventually becoming the head of the department with a University clinical appointment. At the same time, he maintained a busy private practice, partnering with various psychiatrists over the years.

Walt was becoming more interested in psychiatric services that involved more community interaction. So in 1972, he took a year in Madison, Wisconsin, working in a community mental health center with a team whose main responsibilities were to care for people with drug addictions.

It was at this time that Walt and Dorothy separated , eventually divorcing, and he returned to Vancouver living in an apartment and working with a mental health clinic in the downtown Vancouver core on the east side.

Walt enjoyed this work immensely, interacting with other social agencies, joining forces with many and establishing facilities that provided the basic care that many of these people badly required.

In the summer of 1975, Walt changed his living situation by moving into a house sharing arrangement with his close friend, Carolyn (Gage) Mitchell and her two girls Judy and Amy; creating, in effect, a blended family.

After 4 years of work in the community center, he was offered the position of Medical Director of Riverview hospital, at that time a facility of 2500 patients. His job was combined with a University appointment that included teaching, training of residents and developing course curricula.

Walt and Carolyn officially married in July of 1980, in a favourite location – Walt's cabin at Read Is., situated off the coast of Vancouver Island.

In 1982, Walt was offered a position of Senior Psychiatric Consultant in the Ministry of Health and they relocated to Victoria. At this time, he was also given the position of Professor Emeritus (in Psychiatry) at the University of British Columbia. One of Walt's greatest pleasures during this time was helping to develop Psychiatric services in outlying areas, taking residents with him to Terrace and Kitimat on a monthly basis. This was done in conjunction with UBC. Working directly with people was what appealed to Walt the most in his career.

Walt is now retired and he and Carolyn live alone, still in the same house in Victoria. The parents are gone, but there are still family gatherings with his remaining siblings : Natalia, Donna and Dennis , their respective spouses and various other family members. There are many visits with Walt and Carolyn's "blended family".

There have been many changes over the years. Walt and Carolyn have lost 2 of their grown children, they are sadly missed. Walt's daughter, Lynne, passed away 11 years ago of a very aggressive cancer. Lynne had married, then later divorced Dennis Vance. They had 2 children: Jason and Sonja Vance. They had spent most of their married life in the Okanagan south of Penticton. Here Lynne had a gift shop, owned a property where she leased out mobile homes and was a very accomplished gardener. The last few years of her life were spent in Vancouver closer to Jason and Sonja.

Carolyn's daughter, Judy, also died of an aggressive Acute Leukemia 5 years ago. Judy had spent the last 15 or so years of her life working as a shepherd. She and her 3 border collies, with the aid of one assistant handled herds of at least 1200 sheep protecting them and moving them as they grazed on recently logged and replanted mountain tops in northern B.C. Her other love was time spent lambing on a farm outside of Victoria in the off season. She spent the last year and a half of her life living on a farm in Vanderhoof, B.C. with Shane, her partner in the shepherding business.

Fortunately, the rest of the “blended family” are still with us and the family is still growing. Mark, a PhD mathematician, well known for his mathematical research is living in Princeton , New Jersey with his life partner and mathematical colleague, Bob MacPherson (see Mark’s biography for more details).

Lynne’s son, Jason, who is deeply into computers, married Karen and they have one son, Benjamin born in 2007. They have since divorced and are working on co-parenting Ben. They live on the lower mainland.

Sonja, Lynne’s daughter, is an Occupational Therapist. She married Raymond and they have recently separated. She is also living in the lower mainland area.

Leslie’s first husband Ken Ryan, died from cancer a number of years ago. They had one son, Sam Ryan. Leslie has since married Brian Walker. They live on a farm on Texada Is. Leslie does accounting for a number of people, including Walt and Carolyn. She also raises goats and is a very accomplished gardener.

Leslie’s son, Sam (Ryan) who is teaching and working in musical sound reproduction, married, Mandy, a Massage Therapist . They have one daughter, Liv born in 2011. They live on Granville Island.

Brenda (whose name is now Soma) is happily married to Cathy Conway and is living in Watsonville Calif. Soma is a civil engineer and Cathy is involved with fundraising for Hospice.

Amy , Carolyn’s daughter , married Tom Hili some years ago. They are now divorced. They have a daughter, Alicia , who they are co-parenting. Alicia is now 16 and in grade 10 . Amy is a flight attendant with Alaska Airlines. She and Alicia live in Puyallup, Washington .

So at this time our “blended family” consists of 4 grown offspring, their spouses and partners, 4 grandchildren of varying ages and 2 great-grandchildren.