



Mary E. Lees

December 9, 1920 - January 26, 2023

'Grandma' Mary, 102, passed away peacefully with her two 'favorite' grandchildren by her side on Thursday, January 26, 2023.

Mary was born on December 9, 1920, in a picker's cabin on Black Road off Kermel Grade, Omak, WA. She began her education in Omak and graduated in 1939 from Okanogan. After working as a legal secretary for over 50 years, she officially (and reluctantly) retired in 1995. In 1953, Grandma and husband, 'Grandpa' Ivan, founded the business now known as Lees & Duke Excavating. Having coffee or brunch with family and friends, playing pinochle, distributing 'purple pumpkins', and checking out the turkeys on Pogue Road or grandson Mike's cows were highlights of her day.

Mary is survived by grandchildren Sheri (John) Helmold and Mike (Julie) Duke; son-in-law Stan Duke (Loretta); great grandchildren Daryl (Catrina) Ausbun, Lee Ausbun, Amber (Clayton) Murrah, and Mason Duke; step-great grandchildren Kylie Helmold (Skye), Wendy (Cody) Soler, Lovey (Cory) Anderson, and Lacey Garrison (Mark); great-great grandchildren Brianna, Ahri, Austin, Colton, Sophie, Jaxon, Rylee, Charley-Jo, McKinley, Ryder, and Eric; sister-in law Jovanna Jacobs; nephews and nieces Robert, Ivan, Rosie, Russ, Brenda, and Ronda; and more friends than can be listed here.

The family would like to extend a special thank you to Grandma's 'go to town' companions, Dick and Sue Brooks, for their many years of caring service. Thank you also to River Valley Funeral of Okanogan for their help with arrangements, and to ALL who touched her heart.

Mary was preceded in death by her husband Ivan, of 59 years; daughter Barbara; father Gillie; mother Etta; siblings Hazel, Dorothy, Gil Jr., and Betty; several nephews and a niece; and many friends.

Per Grandma's wishes, there will be no service. Please join us instead for 'one last Coffee Break' at the Okanogan Eagles from 1:00 – 3:00 pm on Sunday, February 19, 2023. The family would love to hear your stories.

As Grandma Mary would say, "tah tah, toodly do, aloha", and "here's looking at you kid (Humphry Bogart/Casablanca 1953 {sic})", and "I don't buy green bananas".

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

FEB **19**. 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM (PT)

Okanogan Eagles
1820 2nd Ave. North
Okanogan, WA 98840

Tribute Wall



“ *Mary E. Lees*

October 23, 2023 at 01:06 AM



“ *So sorry to hear of the passing of my mothers (Sallie Wilson) dear friend. She so enjoyed her company, visits at smallwoods for coffee or at the stockyard watching her play pinochle, sharing a meal, coffee and many conversations. Blessings to all of her family. My thoughts are with all of you, Sandy Cinkovich-Wilson (Sallie's eldest daughter)*

Sandy Cinkovich Wilson - August 18, 2023 at 08:22 PM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Mary E. Lees.*



February 16, 2023 at 02:17 PM



“ *Mary was loved by all of us at the Appaloosa Restaurant in Riverside. She would come with Dick for her order to go during the Covid no dine in. We had the privilege to learn about her and her family. She had some wonderful stories to listen to. Always tipped her coffee to Dick with the usual “here’s looking at you kid”, Humphrey Bogart/Casablanca 1953. We all had a good laugh! I will miss her kind sole!! She would always tell me “no regrets” said she has lived a good life. Hugs Mary, you will be missed!*

Christy Lee - February 15, 2023 at 01:08 AM

TM

“ 😭 I have so much on my mind idk where to begin. Mary was more than just a customer at the Stockyard she was ROYALTY. She had a set price & we reserved a table daily just for her. We even kept cottage cheese in stock just for her. I preached it to anyone who came in. If you get around like Mary I'll treat you the same. She paved a path for the building of her own "Stockyard Club" that consisted of Sue, Dick, Dimmy, Darlene, Ernie, occasionally Nora, Bob & Dee. (forgive me if I forgot anyone.)

If it wasn't for her charisma we wouldn't have met so many awesome people. She wasn't shy if she walked into the cafe she would greet everyone in her tracks, unless there was a distraction like an old friend or birthday surprise.

Mary was always so happy and full of life. She was definitely a joker. Her two favorite questions were "Do you believe in the purple pumpkin?" & "Do you believe in the pink elephant?" We have a fish & chip special on Friday. It never failed knowing what to expect of her. She would always ask "Is it FRESH?" "Did you catch it yourself?" We would tell her "yep caught fresh from the stockyard pond." We would spoil her so much at the Stockyard she couldn't believe what we would do, hence her famous words "for heaven's sake." She will be greatly missed by many forgotten my few. She will always be a part of the Okanogan Valley with her spirits. Thank you Mary you're an inspiration to the community for being who you are "Tah Tah" 😭

Tyler McIntosh - January 31, 2023 at 07:38 PM



“ A sympathy card was purchased for the family of Mary E. Lees.



January 31, 2023 at 03:39 PM



“ Once in everyone's life (if they are lucky) they have the pleasure of knowing a truly sweet and friendly loving person. THANK YOU, MARY, for the privilege.

Robert Owen Blank - January 31, 2023 at 03:16 PM



“ My heart hurts for you, Mary was such a great lady in so many ways. It was always a high spot to run into her while we were out and about, she always had a smile for everybody.

Vickie Bozman - January 31, 2023 at 01:03 PM



“ I have know Mary since my childhood. What a sweet lady. My daughter Kaylee knew Mary all of her life to date. When Kaylee was a little girl, she called her Miss Mary. Mary said it made her feel like a southern bell. Spent some great times k we a cup of coffee with her. What a great person.

Lorin Combs - January 30, 2023 at 11:24 PM

DI

“ I am still having trouble wrapping my head around the fact that this great lady has left us. She was such a remarkable lady. It was an honor to take Mary to coffee every week. I will forever miss our conversations on politics and law. Her working for lawyers and I in law enforcement was cause for many conversations about different events that happened and trials that would be going on or the verdicts that were handed down. Her great knowledge of the people and history of this area were phenomenal! At 102 and have the memory she had is unmatched. She not only knew people, she knew their whole lineage. What a remarkable lady! I am blessed to have had her in my life! Her family has over the years become a part of my wife and my extended family! She so loved her family. She talked about them every day. Stories of what her Grandchildren, Great Grandchildren, Great Great Grandchildren and Nephews and Nieces we're all very special to her. She made it us feel like family! I will miss this beautiful lady the rest of my life!

Dick - January 30, 2023 at 07:18 PM

LT

Another piece of my heart broke when Sheri called me to tell me of Mary's passing. I know Mary wouldn't want us to cry over her death. She has always been so special to me & my family. When my husband, Jim, coached baseball, Mike was on his team, Mary would come to all the games. Many times she would take the players for pizza after the game - win or lose. She gave Jim, & his brother money for gas, & even treated us to dinner when we would see her at The Circus drive-in. I especially enjoyed the times when Mary, along with sisters Betty & Hazel, would come down to the Malott School to have coffee with Sheri & I on our breaks. She always brought a large bag full of bulk candy for all the kids. She continued this tradition even after I became the Malott School secretary and Sheri had moved away. When my son, Scott, worked at the Cedars Inn, & went for a meal or coffee, Mary always "encouraged" him to count back the change correctly. On the last day that Scott worked at Cedars - he was going to Ellensburg for college - she & a couple other ladies snuck him some extra money telling him not to say anything. :) Mary was also a wonderful supporter of Okanogan's student athletes. Many generations of students she cheered on, including mine. Mary was one of a kind. She will always hold a special place in my heart & my children's hearts. Rest in peace, Mary.

Leslie Todd - January 31, 2023 at 04:41 AM

SB

“*Mary I poured you your first cup of coffee from me when I was only 16 years old at Carpenters restaurant. We have stayed friends ever since....thru the years we never lost contact. Would run in together from time to time and you always had a hug for me. Who would have thought after all those years I would be taking you out to coffee. You have taught me so much history..made me laugh..cry..had many chats..have made many friends thru you. Going to miss going down Cherry Lane to pick you up and take you for coffee... RIP Mary. I ❤️ you Toodles*

Susan Brooks - January 30, 2023 at 06:10 PM

SO

She always remembered everywhere I worked and how old I was when I worked there. Was so happy to get to see her out and about in different spots!! Going to miss her. We all wish we could live such a long, useful well spent life and touch as many hearts as this dear lady.

Sheila Oxley - January 30, 2023 at 06:36 PM

LS

Mary always had a smile on her face, She would talk to you and tell you how your grandkids did in sports. Which made you feel good that she cared about our community. Mary will be missed by all. Your family was blessed to have Mary for so many wonderful years. Mary's wit and knowledge were fantastic. Linda & Dick Sears

Linda Sears - January 30, 2023 at 08:29 PM

DC

We can only wish we could be a quarter iconic as Mary. I worked my senior year of college summer for Ivan driving dump truck and then later having Mary draw up papers for my first business partnership. Over the years she remembered all of it without a hesitation. Every time I saw her at the Stockyards or on Mainstreet Omak she would remember me and some additional details I didn't recall. People like Mary molded the character of why we all love this valley. She will be missed and remembered greatly!!!

Dennis Carlton - January 30, 2023 at 10:08 PM

SK

2/7/23 I've known Mary Lees my entire life & I'm 79 years young! Mary & Ivan Lees were close friends to my parents, Claude & Margaret Johns. Barbara Lees Duke was my best friend! The first time I remember Mary was the day my brother, Barry was born (7/19/46). Barbara, Janice & I were in the wading pool next to the swimming pool in Okanogan. Mary came walking up & said, "You girls have a new baby brother!" I must have been three yrs old then. One memory of Mary stays with me today. Every Saturday morning Mary would shampoo her naturally blonde hair & put in pin curls, put a scarf over her hair & hang out the wash in her pedal pushers! The wash was on a retractable clothesline over the small canyon next to their house! I can still picture her to this day! I often spent the night with Barbara & vice versa. I looked forward to those nights because we would go out to dinner & see a movie! Yippee! Mary loved her family, coffee, movies, playing pinochle & the color pink. She liked working for Mr. Mansfield as his legal secretary until his retirement. She could type faster than anyone I ever knew. Those were the days my friend. I thought they would never end! Mary was like my second mother! RIP, Mom! By-Sheila Johns Kennedy, Fresno, CA

Sheila Kennedy - February 07, 2023 at 03:05 PM