Sounder Profile

Joyce Burghardt’s recipe for a vital, long life is simple: stay curious.

From the moment she was born to her 90th birthday last month, Burghardt has approached life with enthusiasm.

“I grew up in Queen Anne, and my childhood was magical,” said the Orcas resident. “I was involved in church, musicals, the Camp Fire girls.”

After her idyllic younger years, Burghardt continued pursuing her diverse interests at the University of Washington. She was a sophomore when she was re-introduced to a former childhood neighbor.

“I knew Galen my whole life,” she said. “But he was in the eighth grade when I was in the first grade. When I was in college, his mother called my mother to see if he could come visit for a few weeks. He needed a break from his job in Idaho. Well, in walks this gorgeous man! I had a boyfriend at the time, but it just kind of withered away.”

Joyce and Galen married a year later.

The Burghardts raised three children together: Galen, Jr., Dick and Patty. Joyce, who is a singer and violinist, says they were very involved parents who incorporated music into their children’s lives.

“We used to sit on the kitchen floor, singing and playing the guitar,” she said.

Joyce has remained close to her children. Galen, Jr. has a home on Orcas, Patty is moving to the island soon and Dick visits his mom every other week.

Joyce and her husband bought property on Orcas in 1949 – the same weekend they came to the island for a visit. After helping the Burghardts with a flat tire, a local realtor showed them the “Crescent Beach Cottages.” With no resort experience under their belts, the couple bought the business anyway and were moved in by July 4. It was the start of 11 years as proprietors of what Joyce calls “the league of nations.”

“We met all kinds of travelers,” she said. “In those days, people stayed for three or four weeks.”

During their first stint on Orcas, Joyce and Galen helped created the Eastsound water system and the Orcas Yacht Club and were involved with the Orcas Singers and the March of Dimes.

In 1961, the family moved back to Seattle to care for Joyce’s parents. During that time, she returned to the University of Washington, earning a degree in psychology in 1973. A decade later, while director of the Girls Club of Puget Sound, she went back to school again, finishing a masters in human resource management from the University of Utah’s distance program.

In addition to being a singer and playing violin, Joyce loves to cook. She and Galen created a cooking club in Seattle with four other couples.

The Burghardts returned to Orcas in 1981. Joyce was involved in the EPRC for 15 years, helping design the way Eastsound looks today. She was a founding member of the Orcas Community Foundation and served on the boards of the Orcas Center, Long House and Orcas Medical Center to name a few. She has been a member of the Choral Society and the Music Advocacy Group for years. Joyce has also participated in countless local theatre productions. Galen passed away in 2005.

Since 1988, Joyce has been teaching water aerobics, first at Rosario and now at Orcas Spa and Athletics.

Joyce began teaching swimming during her 20 years at the Red Cross in Seattle. She taught the first swimming class in the Central District of Seattle for pregnant teens and kids.

She credits her youthful energy with staying active and always being curious about life.

“And good dogs – we’ve always had really good dogs,” Joyce said.

**Joyce Burghardt Highlights**

Her father was a camper at Orkilla- that’s what brought them to Orcas

Credits Campfire Girls for teaching her she was responsible for her community

Funded first well for Eastsound Water

Donated Crescent Beach property to Land Bank

Founding member of EPRC

Help develop the current Eastsound plan

Founding member of OICF

Served on Orcas Center Board, Choral Society, MAG

Ran the March of Dimes campaign for San Juan County

Lifelong vestry member for Episcopal Church

Provided boat transport for the minister for many years