

Tributes to Margaret Pyrgos (1914-2014)
from former pupils and friends, July 2014

(surnames have been removed for privacy)

I am one of Mrs. Pyrgos' former students at Crofton House School - back in the 1950's. She was always my favourite teacher, who taught with a passion for her language and understanding for those who had difficulty with it. I loved French and enjoyed her classes. When we went to UBC we met her husband, Nick who was in law school and who was so much fun! I will see that any information about Margaret's Memorial Service reaches my classmates. Thanks for keeping us informed.

- Danae M

I am a Croftonian, class of '68 and so Madame Pyrgos (as we knew her) taught me French for 4 years. I would be interested in knowing the date and details of the memorial service planned for her. I am currently our class rep and I will pass that information on to my classmates. Since our 40th reunion, a group of about 20 of us still based in Vancouver meet for brunch bimonthly....often there is a conversation about our teachers! She was always well regarded by all of us. I was saddened to read of the accident...but quite amazed to realize she lived another 20 or so years. Please accept my sincere condolences.

- Liz C

I send commiserations from Dartmoor in Devon, England. I have many fond memories of Mrs. Pyrgos who taught me French for the four years I lived in Vancouver in the 1960s. She was a fellow English person which I valued too - and I personally always rather liked grammar. She taught me well & I got very good results [I remember 92% on the final S-level exam. in Grade XII I think!] given that I have no natural talent with languages!! The result was a stunning tribute to her teaching [a career I eventually also followed albeit as a Mathematician not a Linguist].

- Caroline B, Crofton House 1963-1967.

I was sorry to hear of your Aunt's passing. On behalf of my mother I wish to extend my condolences. Mum, Mrs. Lilian P, taught at Crofton House with Mrs. Pyrgos for many years. Like your Aunt, Mum was born in England in 1912. She attended Oxford graduating with degrees in Math and Physics. Quite an accomplishment for women of your Aunt's and my Mother's generation to take higher education. Fortunately they were able to use their degrees by sharing their knowledge with many generations of Crofton girls. When Mum died in 1994 many Crofton 'girls' attended the service. The gap between her retirement and passing was much shorter than for your Aunt. The girls your Aunt taught are now older women and the years have passed. While may not attend a memorial service I am sure the warm feelings they expressed on my mother's passing would equally apply to their memories of your Aunt.

- Ann P

I am writing to offer my condolences on the death of your aunt Margaret Pyrgos. She taught me French at Crofton House from Grade 7 through 12 in the 1960s. She was one of my favorite teachers. I live in Montreal now, and although Mme Pyrgos would be shocked at the way we speak Franglais in Quebec, I do appreciate her efforts to educate us. My kids all went through French Immersion so their accents may be purer, but I can still correct their grammar. I work at McGill University, advising Biology students now. I doubt that I could make it to Vancouver for a memorial, but I'll always remember her fondly. Amazing that she lived to a ripe old age of 100.

- Nancy N

My name is Pippa and I was a student of Mme. Pyrgos at Crofton House. I was very sorry to hear about Mme. Pyrgos' death.....I will be thinking of you and of Mme Pyrgos who was an intelligent, kind, caring, fair, dedicated and compassionate teacher. All of these adjectives together cannot be applied to many of the other teachers I had at Crofton House.

- Pippa C

My mother and I both knew Mrs Pyrgos, and would like to help with a memorial service and tribute to her, as needed. We live in Vancouver, BC. I was a student at CHS and graduated in June 1987; Madame Pyrgos was my French teacher as well as helping me perform in school drama.

- Rosalind K, CHS Head Girl and graduate 1967

On behalf of the Crofton House School class of 1961 we are sorry to read of her passing. We remember her well and the enjoyment of learning French with her and having special French speaking lunches when we were in our senior year.....

- Sheena B

Firstly, my condolences to you and all your family on the death of Margaret. In reading the obituary, I am happy to learn that she had a rich and full life nearly into her 90's; and that Nicky lived a long life as well. They were so devoted to each other – and of course their dogs. I am a Croftonian – class of '68 (née G) – and Madame Pyrgos ranks up there with the very best teachers I've ever had at any time in my schooling. She was a total lady, with a twinkle in her eye, a look that could stop you at 50 paces, and an extraordinary gift for teaching French and drama. I can still recite the "entré, rentré, arrive" verse she taught us in respect to remembering reflexive verbs! I also recall that, when we were writing our government exams, I mentioned that I wouldn't be writing the scholarship one for French – and Madame Pyrgos advised that I would be writing it and in fact she would nail me to the desk if needed! Fortunately I acquiesced and ended up gaining a 1st class scholarship due to my French and English exam marks! I did not see her much after graduation, probably only a half dozen times, largely because I spent time out of Vancouver and now reside in New Zealand. I had not heard of Madame Pyrgos for some years so thought she had left this world; ironically I was in Vancouver in June and again in July and meeting people at the Vancouver Lawn Tennis Club, only a block away from South Granville Park Lodge. Had I known she was still alive, I would have gone to say hello to Madame Pyrgos. While I suspect she wasn't the same person from my days at Crofton House, due to the brain injury, I doubt she ever lost her "loveliness". She will always be one of my favourite teachers. A truly special woman – bless you for honouring her with such a wonderful obituary.

- Sue L

Having received the news from Wendy L of your Aunt's passing, I sent out a notice to our classmates, the Crofton House graduating Class of 1967. I loved all the responses, some of which I feel you might wish to use in your recollections of a wonderful legacy Madame Pyrgos achieved amongst just some of her many students. CHS 1967 classmates all wish your family 'your own' fond Madame Pyrgos memories to carry you through this difficult time. Thinking of her and you!

- Roxana A, CHS '67 Co-correspondence representative

Elaine V - " I remember Mme Pyrgos for the warmth of her personality and her sense of humour; setting grammar aside and letting us mellow out to the stories of Saint Exupery - all very welcome on those chilly CHS mornings. I am grateful to have had the chance to relate my positive memories to her at our reunion many years ago. As any teacher would respond, she smiled and looked very pleased."

Lorraine C - "She was so dedicated, an inspiration to those of us who became teachers. I remember the interesting stories about her life in Europe!"

Janet O - "I was so surprised to know she was still alive. 100 wow ! Fond memories of Mugeut de Bois, my fav spring harbinger, 'tails' of her 2 basset hounds and lovely romantic travels in her head taking us all on travels through life in Paris and France! Happy summer to all, and cheers to a life well remembered."

Gina W - "She was one of my favourite teachers as well. She was a unique and interesting woman. Wow! 100 years young! Now, that is an inspiration!"

Nancy N - "I remember her fondly, looking exactly as she did in the first photo. She is probably the teacher I recall most vividly."

Wendy D - "I'm sure I was one of the bane's of Madame Pyrgos."

Lynn M - "Remembering Madame Pyrgos ...funny how little we knew of our teachers' personal lives, just not proper in those days. I do remember her being very easily enticed into story telling, also know as a result of my hyper nature in those days I was not her favourite, but I can understand and speak some French still and when I do people are surprised, as a Canadian, it is with a true French accent, I credit her for that!

Roxana M - "I too was probably like classmate Wendy has said 'a bane' in her efforts to help me grasp a beautiful language. Although I was not mature enough at the time to appreciate the work required to learn the french language, she never made me feel uncomfortable in her class. Through her gentle encouragement in those early years, I was inspired in later years to pursue taking french classes and speaking french, unfortunately now 'a bane' to others listening to my attempts! Merci beaucoup, Madame Pyrgos! A bientot!"

I would like to send our sympathies to your families regarding the passing of your aunt Margaret Pyrgos. Margaret and Nic would frequent my families resort, Kokanee Beach Resort on Nicola Lake outside of Merritt, BC for many, many years. Nic would go duck hunting with many family members. They would usually arrive in the fall months with their dogs.. My father, George C (passed away 10yrs ago) and my mother, Yvonne C (who still lives in Merritt) kept in contact with Margaret for many, many years after Margaret and Nic no longer vacationed at Kokanee Beach. The Resort is no longer operating. I have continued sending Christmas cards all these years as Margaret was also a friend of my Grandma's, Violet C who passed away Feb.2013. Grandma was 1 month older than Margaret to the day. (Dec.5/1913). David A was always very kind to respond to the receipt of the card. I realize she did not know about the arrival of my cards due to her state of health, but felt I still wanted to remember her in some way, even if it meant the card sitting beside her on her night table. I remember one trip when Margaret came to Merritt, she stayed with my parents and we took her to my sisters for a nice visit. I also remember my dad would send her flowers, roses I believe. I have fond memories of Margaret and Nic at Kokanee, with their dogs. They were very kind people, so welcoming.

- Patty C

We send our condolences, your Aunt Margaret was a wonderful wonderful lady. Our family has such fond memories of her and her husband Nick as they frequented our family resort on Nicola Lake with their basset hounds for so many years. Margaret was such a proper lady and Nick was such a Greek gentleman!!! I remember a Thanksgiving dinner we had at our resort and they were our guests. I adored them so much. My parents kept in touch with them over the years with the passing of Nick and keeping in touch with Margaret. When my father passed away my mother kept in touch with Margaret. I remember having her to my home for a visit and tea and I was so grateful that I had proper teacups and saucers to serve tea to such a beautiful proper woman she was soooo sweet. If my father was still alive he could tell you some hunting stories!!!!!! Nick loved his dogs and his wife. My parents ran Kokanee Beach Resort for 37 yrs and in those yrs many people came back every year and those are the people you remember- Nick and Margaret were those people. We lost touch with her - my mom continued to send her cards and letters but never received any response we thought she had passed years ago. We would like you to know that we truly adored your Aunt Margaret and her husband Nick they were very very special people.

- Shannon and family

It was with some surprise and sadness that I read of the passing of Margret Pyrgos. 100! My goodness. My brother David and I (that last surviving members of our family) grew up on Highbury St., four houses down from Mr. & Mrs. Pyrgos. They were wonderful neighbours and always very kind to me and my brothers and sister—my sister, who passed away in 1972 had been a student of Margaret's at Cro-on House as well. My fondest memories are of Margaret walking the two basset hounds, Basil and Alexander, past our house every evening. Margaret always would let me pet them. This was especially poignant as the previous resident of their house on Highbury also had a basset hound, named Humphrey. She had been Humphrey's grandmother to us and we were sad when she moved away. But we weren't sad for long as Humphrey was replaced by not one but two bassets! The other memory I have is of Nick (or as I should say Mr. Pyrgos, as I was only a lad) riding shirtless and in shorts on a very small mini-bike up and down our street one summer. Growing up on Highbury in the 1960's was quite magical, or so it seems now a-er all these years, and Mr. & Mrs. Pyrgos added much colour to the street. I was terribly sorry to read that Margaret's last years were not as they should have been but it seems she was well cared for and loved. And isn't that only what any of us can ask for?

- Stuart M

From the online Obituary Guest Book:

July 08, 2014

Margaret and Nichloas. Where my next door neighbours on Highbury street for many years, and were a great couple, always had 2 Bassett hounds that Nick took out hunting and Margaret loved her garden and her students. I lost contact with her a few years ago when she was living in Kerrisdale, "They are together again forever"

- Lynne Walker, Vancouver, BC

July 08, 2014

We purchased Margaret and Nicholas' home from them in 1990. Although we are not the gardeners that Margaret was, we have attempted to maintain her heritage plants. Her roses, camelias, rhododendrons, azaleas and lilac still remain. Thank you, Margaret for providing us with this legacy.

- Marian Wight, Vancouver, BC

October 16, 2014

Mrs. Pyrgos was a lovely lady who will truly be missed. As one of my educators she was always attentive and kind.

~ Debbie Moschonas, Scottsdale, AZ