

Judith Jardine – a shy philanthropist

We know very little about Judith Jardine, which is part of what makes this story so compelling.



We know that Jardine was born October 4, 1924; the only child of Gladys and William Jardine; and the only grandchild of Willard and Mary Kitchen.

We have only three pictures of her. Two were taken in 1978 by a portrait photographer of the time. Jardine would have been 54 when this photo was taken.

Jardine was born into a life of wealth and privilege. Her grandfather Willard Kitchen was a director of the Pacific Great Eastern Railway, which later became BC Rail.

Willard and Mary had three daughters – Agnes, Ellen and Gladys. The two eldest daughters – Agnes and Ellen – never married. The third, Gladys, studied law at the University of New Brunswick and was called to the bar in 1918. She became one of Vancouver’s first female lawyers. Gladys married William Jardine, a local banker, and they had one child – Judith.

Like her two aunts, Jardine never married. She was passionately interested in the arts and teaching (though it’s unclear whether she ever taught professionally). She received an MA in French from UBC in 1947 (her thesis was on *Vigny et l’Angleterre: Shakespeare, Milton et Byron*). She was Secretary of Vancouver’s Community Arts Council from 1962 to 1979, and co-authored a book on the history of the council.

We know that in 1987, Jardine’s Aunt Ellen – the last of three Kitchen daughters – died, and Jardine inherited WilMar Estate – a large property at 2050 SW Marine Drive. “WilMar” is a conflation of Willard and Mary. The estate comprises a 9,000-square-foot house, coach house and three-car garage, perched on two acres of prime land. Jardine’s grandfather Willard built WilMar for \$10,000 in 1925.



WilMar Estate was hearth and home for the Kitchen family and descendants for more than 80 years. Judith Jardine lived there, shy and reclusive to the end. She suffered from dementia in her final years, and died on May 7, 2006 at the age of 82.

But Jardine’s story doesn’t end there. In fact, in many ways, that is just the beginning...

On her passing, Judith Jardine made an uncharacteristically big splash — and the ripples are still being felt. She had no heirs and she gave no hint of her intentions.

When her will was read, the UBC Faculty of Medicine, Vancouver School of Theology and Vancouver Foundation were all surprised to find they were included as beneficiaries. Since Jardine's death in 2006, and as the extent of the Jardine estate became clearer, the beneficiaries realized they had been given about \$6.4 million, \$50,000 and about \$34 million, respectively.

The money comes from Jardine's house — the WilMar estate — and numerous investments. This is the largest personal gift Vancouver Foundation has ever received, and one of the largest charitable bequests in BC history.

In her will, Jardine also asked Vancouver Foundation to set up the W.E. Jardine Memorial Fund in memory of her father. When invested, the fund is expected to generate about \$1.4 million for granting every year. Jardine wanted this money split in two — with \$700,000 annually going to BC Conference of the United Church, and \$700,000 to Vancouver Foundation.

Vancouver Foundation will keep the donated capital intact, and could use its portion of the income to support vital programs in Vancouver, such as expanding its Neighbourhood Small Grants program to even more neighbourhoods; and strengthening its efforts to reduce youth homelessness.

More than seven years have passed since Ms. Jardine's death, and her estate has not yet been fully wound up. There are numerous reasons for the lengthy delay. The original Executor passed away before completing his duties. Determining the full extent of the assets has involved considerable effort, research and detailed accounting, all of which took time to gather. Also, selling the property required lengthy consultations and heritage approval, which is not yet complete.

For more information about the Jardine bequest or the W.E. Jardine Memorial Fund, or about legacy and memorial funds in general, call Vancouver Foundation's Development and Donor Services at 604-688-2204.

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