

Shirley was born on March 25, 1935 in Gravenhurst. As a young girl she enjoyed music, particularly playing the trumpet and she was involved in numerous sports. She worked for the town of Gravenhurst as the town clerk and then worked for a short time in Toronto for the Workman's Compensation Board. In 1957 she married Ben and moved to Bass Lake where together, they began the Bass Lake Store. It is here that she began to develop a strong sense of community.

That sense of community began with her family. Shirley raised three girls, Andrea, JoAnne and Jenny while working in the store, running a motel and keeping track of Benny! She even found time to take care of small cabins in their early Bass Lake days, which were rented every summer by a family from Leamington.

In the greater community, Shirley liked to be involved in various activities in Foot's Bay and MacTier. She helped organized Christmas celebrations, fund raisers and parades. She also worked diligently for the Foot's Bay Fire Department as they began to establish themselves in the area. Shirley gave much of her time to help plan dances, special events and fund raisers for the station now known as "Fire Station One. "

That very same station honoured Shirley this past Monday, June 27th as they recognized the contributions she made to the community by serving as the first civilian dispatcher. On June 23rd after Shirley's passing the following memorandum was issued by the office of the fire chief in the Township of Muskoka Lakes: "It is with deepest sorrow that we inform you of the passing of Shirley Roberts, wife of Ben Roberts, former Station Chief of Foot's Bay, on June 23rd, 2011. Shirley will be sadly missed by all. Shirley has been at Ben's side for over half a century serving our community. She was our first dispatcher over 50 years ago. Long before the days of radios and pagers, a fire phone system was in place. There was a 'dedicated' fire phone at their house. When someone had a fire they would call the 'fire phone' which would ring in their house until answered. Then Shirley would call the crews on the phone system and advise them about the fire. All municipal buildings are requested to lower their flags to half-mast in respect for Shirley." Two honour guards stood watch during Shirley's memorial service and firefighters from various stations attended in full uniform.

Shirley brought the same dedication to her role as treasurer for the Bass Lake Association which began many years ago. Her family has been moved by the number of Bass Lake cottagers who have paid their respects with kind words and happy memories. People recall coming to the lake for the first time and meeting Ben and Shirley. Fond memories consist of being made to feel very welcome and at home on Bass Lake. One of Shirley's favourite Bass Lake events has been the annual corn roast which she and Ben began many years ago on the beach in front of the Bass Lake Store. That was an event that included everyone, young and old alike which is the part of community that Shirley liked best.