

Summerhayes lobbied for performing arts complex

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"He was warm, friendly, compassionate, caring and supportive and showed us a fine example of a great husband. He always greeted us with a huge, warm hug, and we knew he enjoyed our company."

Summerhayes died at dawn Sunday. He was 76.

A memorial service is planned for Nov. 28 at 3 p.m. in the Toyota Room of the Cambridge Centre for the Arts, 60 Dickson St.

Friends and family were shocked when the pillar of health and vigour was diagnosed in February with inoperable cancer in his abdomen. He refused treatment and fought the illness on his terms, setting goals to attend family celebrations, raising money for favourite charities and voting in the Oct. 25 municipal election. Through the summer, Summerhayes thumbed his nose at the cancer in his gut, striding around downtown, greeting friends with a smile and handshake.

Born in London, he first came to Canada during the Second World War when thousands of children were evacuated away from German bomb attacks. He returned to his family in 1944, then returned to Canada with his family at age 16 in 1950. He studied at the University of Toronto and was ordained an Anglican minister.

He met Jill in 1974, when he was a church rector in Toronto and growing frustrated with church politics. He left the church in 1977, married Jill and moved to Cambridge.

Summerhayes was always vocal about trying to stop violence against women. He was a stalwart supporter of the first women's crisis shelter in Cambridge in the early 1980s, said Enid Powell, former director of the agency.

"He was there when we struggled through the \$20,000-a-year budget living on Water Street, to

moving to Preston in a more spacious home.

"He was quietly respectful of the residents — even when accused of berating one, when he had never uttered a word."

Stuart ran unsuccessfully for city council three times, joined the city's volunteer heritage committee and later joined with other arts supporters to lobby the city to build a performing arts theatre complex in Cambridge. That push transformed into plans for a theatre along the Grand River for use by Drayton Entertainment. Construction starts early next year.

Cambridge poet Nancy Morrey said Summerhayes "brought a sense of theatre, art and flair to everything he undertook." She first met him in 1997 as he sported a tuxedo at the city's annual Bernice Adams arts awards — a sign of respect and a tribute to volunteer organizers and awards recipients, she said.

"For Stuart, life itself was a black-tie event. His presence will be missed but his contributions and accomplishments will never be forgotten."

Friend Graham Miles remembers Summerhayes as the consummate, elegant gentleman who was never ruffled or uttered a foul word. He spread a "cloak of elegance" over any room he entered, Miles said. "I'm sure he could have walked into a bar full of lumberjacks and bikers and by the end of the evening they would have been drinking tea from china cups, their pinkies delicately extended."

Friends Val and Keith Bellamy of Wiltshire, England, remember Summerhayes' "zest and passion for life" along with his readiness to share laughter.

Friends and family remember the disciplined, competitive and athletic Summerhayes' weakness: ice cream with all the unhealthy toppings. They also smile when recalling Summerhayes denying he was stubborn.

Summerhayes was an in-

spiration to Rob Fox, who remembers his passion for the arts while a member with Fox on the committee running the Cambridge Centre for the Arts.

Fox also learned to race walk from Summerhayes, a man he remembers as a hard-driven athlete who always took time to nurture the abilities of others.

"He will always be an inspiration to me."

Summerhayes took up running at 35, to battle his expanding waistline. At 55, he discovered racewalking. It became his passion. He competed internationally and set 25 Canadian records in the masters category.

A member of the Cambridge Sports Hall of Fame, Summerhayes' last life goal was to attend his Oct. 30 induction ceremony into the Ontario Masters Athletics Hall of Fame. He attended with family and friends carrying him part of the way into the gala at a Toronto hotel.

Fox was also wowed watching Summerhayes conduct the Cambridge Community Orchestra for the first time in June.

"What a talented man with such a healthy attitude toward all of life's treasures. He will be missed," Fox said.

Summerhayes won the chance to conduct in a fundraising event in February, four days before he was diagnosed with advanced liver and colon cancer.

Conductor Sabatino Vacca remembers how Summerhayes — a man who had never picked up a baton — threw himself into the difficult job of conducting 40 musicians and two soloists. The music was Summerhayes' favourite opera set: the duet *La ci darem la mano* from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

"You might say he grabbed the orchestra by the horns and took charge, exhibiting incredible courage throughout the process right through to the performance."

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