



Tributes to Shirley Buie at the site of her fatal accident include pictures with Zoe, the golden retriever she was walking when she died. Photo by Dan Toulgoet.

Senior's death prompts call for crosswalk

By Sandra Thomas-Staff writer, August 5, 2004

Last July, Shirley Buie went paragliding off Grouse Mountain to celebrate her 75th birthday. On Jan. 1, she took part in her sixth annual polar bear swim at English Bay.

Last Monday, however, the senior's extraordinary life ended when she was struck and killed by a car as she crossed 33rd Avenue at Dunbar Street, an intersection with no marked crosswalk that's notorious for near misses between cars and pedestrians.

Her daughter, Susan Buie, hopes the tragedy will be the catalyst to convince the city to install a controlled crosswalk or traffic light at the busy corner.

"Mom and all her friends were always nervous about that corner," Buie said. "When mom was hit, she was wearing red flashing lights on her clothing. She could not have been more visible."

Buie said while she was at the intersection Sunday as police worked on their investigation, several people stopped to tell her about their own near misses. "At one point, one of the officers was trying to cross the street and the traffic wouldn't even stop for him."

Shirley Buie was hit just after 7:30 a.m. Jan. 13, as she returned from the park adjacent to the Dunbar Community Centre after walking her golden retriever, Zoe. She had just crossed Dunbar and was heading south across 33rd at the corner when a northbound car turning right off Dunbar struck her. She died at the scene of head injuries.

"Mom was so vibrant and alive. She really enjoyed life and wasn't ready to go yet," said Susan Buie. "It's not right."

Buie said several people have told her they've called city hall inquiring about installing a controlled crosswalk at the intersection. A controlled crosswalk is already in place at 31st and Dunbar, outside the entrance to the community centre, but there are no controls at 33rd, a major east-west connector.

A meeting is set for tonight between the Dunbar Community Association Board, police and city engineers to discuss options for the intersection, said Const. Tim Fanning, police liaison with the Dunbar Community Policing Centre.

Fanning, who played the bagpipes at Buie's funeral Friday, said he'd known Shirley Buie for years.

"The church was standing room only. She was quite the lady," he said. "She was the kind of person I hope to aspire to when I retire. This is very sad."

Ian Adam, assistant engineer with the city's transportation division, said the city won't be able to start its investigation until police have finished theirs.

"Right now it's not at the top of our list," he said. "But if the police tell us it's a problem, it will get a higher priority."

He said the city is trying to discourage people from using 33rd Avenue unless they live nearby, which is one reason few improvements have been made to the bumpy, pot-holed street running from the West Side to Kingsway.

Adam acknowledges the intersection can be dangerous and adds the onus is on drivers to slow down and watch for pedestrians, especially when they're turning left onto a busy street like 33rd.

"They're so busy watching for a break in traffic they forget to watch for pedestrians. Drivers should always look for pedestrians first."

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Simon Roberts: "We never considered a bench because anyone who knew Shirley knows she never sat down." Photo by Dan Toulgoet.

Fountain honours Dunbar senior killed by car

By Sandra Thomas-Staff writer. August 5, 2004

A Dunbar senior struck and killed by a car last year while walking her dog will be honoured with a drinking fountain dedicated to her memory.

Located in the park adjacent to the Dunbar Community Centre, the new fountain has a tall section for humans and a shorter section with a drinking bowl for dogs.

That's something 76-year-old Shirley Buie would have appreciated, says friend Simon Roberts.

"Shirley would like that a lot because she always got a kick out of watching dogs using the regular fountain."

The dedication inscribed on the fountain, which will be officially unveiled May 30 during the Salmonberry Festival, describes Buie as a woman who "lived her life fully" and "cared for all creatures great and small."

"Lived her life fully" would be an understatement when it comes to describing the well-liked senior. In 2002, Buie went paragliding off Grouse Mountain to celebrate her 75th birthday. Just weeks before her death on Jan. 13, 2003, she took part in her sixth annual polar bear swim at English Bay.

She died when she was struck by a car at 7:30 a.m. as she crossed 33rd Avenue at Dunbar, while walking her much-loved golden retriever Zoe. No charges were laid in the accident, but Buie's death was the last straw for residents who had been pressuring the city to install traffic lights or a pedestrian-controlled crosswalk at the dangerous intersection.

A controlled crosswalk was already in place at 31st and Dunbar, outside the entrance to the community centre, but until Buie died, there was nothing at 33rd, a major east-west connector.

Roberts said a committee was formed at the Dunbar Community Centre shortly after Buie's death to find a solution for the intersection. After consulting with city engineers, the group decided on a pedestrian-controlled light.

At the time of Buie's death, daughter Susan Buie said she hoped the tragedy would be a catalyst to convince the city to put in some controls at the busy corner.

"Mom and all her friends were always nervous about that corner," Susan Buie said. "When mom was hit, she was wearing red flashing lights on her clothing. She could not have been more visible."

Susan Buie is out of town this week but told Roberts she plans to be back in time for the dedication.

"Susan is very happy about the fountain and the crosswalk," he said. "She's happy to know something good came of her mother's death."

After the crosswalk was secured, the community turned its attention to raising funds for a memorial and finally decided on the fountain.

Roberts said \$3,000 was raised through donation boxes at the Dunbar Community Centre and local stores Buie frequented. The parks board gave the OK to the project and picked up the rest of the tab by donating labour and some materials.

"We never considered a bench because anyone who knew Shirley knows she never sat down," said Roberts. "A lot of people knew her and it was a big shock to us all when we heard. Almost right away we started thinking of something Shirley would like and the fountain seems so right. She just loved dogs."

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