

Remembering Gibsons' Helen Alp

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Well over 70 people packed into Leo's Tapas and Grill on March 7 to pay their respects and share their memories about Gibsons' Helen Alp, who passed away at the age of 82 on March 1.

A well known character in the community, Alp was seen regularly pushing her cart and picking up bottles, cans and trash in the town.

It was something she did for a little extra money, but also for the satisfaction of keeping her community clean.

Those who knew Alp spoke about her generosity, her openness and her way of wrangling a ride out of almost anyone with much laughter and a few tears at the memorial gathering last Friday.

"When *The Beachcombers* was here they had Relic and they had, of course, the *Persephone* and they had Nick — they missed out on Helen. She was our real *Beachcombers* character," said Ed Hill, a former Gibsons RCMP staff sergeant who formed a relationship with Alp over the years.

He noted that he, like many others, felt sorry for Alp in the beginning, assuming she was a bag lady with no place to live.

"But then she invited a whole bunch of us, some of you I see here, to her mortgage burning party for gosh sake! To a house on the bluff! And when we walked inside the home, it was home. It was beautiful, clean, well kept. It was so embracing and all of us who knew Helen now at that level knew that we had this very special friend



CHRISTINE WOOD PHOTO

Dozens of community members came out to pay their respects and remember the late Helen Alp on March 7 at Leo's Tapas and Grill where this lovely painting of Alp by artist Tamara De Grandmaison was on display. See more photos and video on our website at www.coastreporter.net

forever," recalled Hill.

Former Gibsons mayor Barry Janyk also rose to speak about Alp, remembering how excited she was when he unveiled a new cart for her to use, designed by Spin Cycles in 2010.

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CHRISTINE WOOD PHOTO

Ed Hill was one of several speakers who recalled fond memories of Helen Alp at a memorial last Friday, March 8.



Alp fondly remembered

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"Some of the deluxe features of that Bentley model were stainless steel bell, custom fitted hand brake and high capacity bucket. She was so damn happy she cried," Janyk said. "I think we all did a little."

He said the Town once recognized Alp at a volunteer luncheon and that she was "thrilled silly just to be recognized for being a good person."

Alp's friend Kryss Rubeniuk spoke passionately about

her departed friend, who she said was an "absolutely beautiful person."

"In all the sadness of Helen's passing is the brightness of every sunrise, the beauty of every sunset and the joy of Helen being free, free of any physical and emotional encumbrances. She is free," Rubeniuk said.

"God has a million doors to walk through to his love. Helen was one of those doors. She forever touched my world and I'm honoured for the gift of having had

her friendship."

As a way to remember Alp, Hill suggested everyone take a moment each day to pick up a piece of garbage from the street, throw it out and say "this one's for you, Helen."

Alp was born on Aug. 15, 1931, in Greece and came to Canada in 1966 with her husband Edip. The couple settled on the Sunshine Coast with their three sons in 1980.

Alp is survived by her sons Victor, Edward and Richard.

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