



REMEMBERING

Florence Vert-Hazel

February 7, 1931 - June 24, 2020



Florence Ethel, eldest daughter of Tom and Ethel Thompson, was born February 7, 1931 at the Vermilion Hospital, Vermilion, Alberta. Life on the farm was difficult in a house with no electricity, no running water, a wood stove, and an outhouse about 50 yards from the house. Even with farm chores, there was still time for lots of fun - ice-skating and tobogganing in the winter and picnics and games in the summer. Ethel was a great cook and baker and the house was almost always filled with the smells of bread baking, a roast simmering, or freshly-baked pies. Tom went off to fight in WWII, leaving Ethel at home with five young girls to run the farm in his absence. Florence said life then was very hard. She had to get up extremely early to milk the cows and do chores, have breakfast and then walk three miles to school. After school, she had to walk home, do all her chores, eat supper, and find a little time to do homework before collapsing into bed for a few hours. She was only a young teen at the time, but the eldest, so had the lion's share of the work. She said she was just exhausted all the time. By the time her father returned from the war, Florence was a young woman and had taken to attending the Alliance Church in Vermilion in the company of a young man by the name of Joseph Vert. One thing led to another, and after a few missteps, Joe and Florence were married October 13, 1948. They lived for a time in Vermilion, moved to Calgary for a brief time, and then to Prairie Bible Institute in Three Hills, Alberta, in the fall of 1953. They were only going to stay for 6 months and ended up on staff there until Joe's retirement. They said their 6 months never arrived!

Joe and Florence adopted two children that completed their family, Janice in 1958, and Daniel in 1961. For a time, Florence held several temp jobs on the Prairie campus and also helped out in the Kindergarten. Soon, however, her family took priority and she concentrated her energy on providing a home for her family. She welcomed many, many guests into her home over the years. Bible School students from around the world found the Vert home to be their 'home away from home' and were welcomed in on a regular basis. Florence always was ready with a meal and friendship, even when her mealtime was suddenly increased by a person or two. She loved to entertain and had learned early to cook for many. Large gatherings for meals were a regular occurrence. There were many game nights and puzzles

engaged in around the large wooden table Joe had built to accommodate their many guests. Students would often stay over working on papers and assignments as deadlines grew near. Florence said her mission was to do whatever needed to be done to enable others to do their best. In that way, she was a superb behind-the-lines support.

One of the ways she earned a little extra money was by selling AVON. She also saw it as part of her 'mission' - providing both necessities and some of the little luxuries in life - to others. She had an eclectic mix of clientele from students in the dorms, people on staff and in the community to others outside the community, including local Hutterites. They used to descend on the house when they came in to town, twittering and giggling over the wares in Florence's AVON cupboard. They were usually good customers, although they liked to haggle and would often exchange garden produce or chickens for products.

Florence had quite an artistic talent exhibited in drawings, and in later years, colouring. She seemed to have a special sense and gift for picking colours that enhanced the artwork. She was also highly organized and kept meticulous notes and journals. Janice and Caitlind were thankful for this while recently sorting through Florence's vast collection of photographs. Every photograph was dated and had details as to where and who written on the back of every picture. It certainly made their sorting job much easier! In earlier years, Florence did a lot of crocheting and Caitlind is the recipient of a large crocheted bedspread that is her handiwork.

Being a "farm girl" meant she never shirked away from hard work.

Joe and Florence loved to travel and undertook many adventures in later years, often in the company of Joe's nephew and wife, Lawrance and Eileen Ward. Other travel companions over the years included George and Mildred Wittman and Albert (Joe's brother) and Mary Vert, among others.

After Joe's passing from cancer in 1991, Florence found companionship and a new love in Gerry Hazel. She and Gerry were married in 2002. They continued to travel and enjoyed their lives together until Gerry's passing in 2007. It was a hard year as Florence and Joe's son, Dan, also passed away in 2007.

A number of happy years were spent with Gerry in a new home Janice and her then-husband, Allan Meeks, built for them in Three Hills. The entertaining continued in this new house with its ample deck and spacious back yard. Later years were spent in The Chateau in Three Hills, and then the Golden Hills Lodge. Florence remained cheerful despite more and more limitations on her movements due to osteoporosis. She had several falls with broken bones that entailed long weeks in hospital and months of recuperation and rehabilitation.

In December of 2014, while on a Christmas visit with Jan and her partner in Abbotsford, Florence fell and shattered her pelvis. It was at this time she learned that surgery was not an option and faced the fact that she would not walk again. It also meant that she would be staying in Abbotsford. While that meant she was close to Janice and some other dear, long-time friends, it also meant that she never returned to Alberta. She never saw her place again and never saw all those friends and acquaintances again. That would be hard for anyone, but Florence was already over 80. Nevertheless, she maintained a cheery front and adapted to her 6-week hospital stay, her 2-month rehab stint in Agassiz, and then her new home at Menno Hospital in Menno Place, Abbotsford, where she received 24/7 care. She quickly made new friends and settled into a new routine of activities and care. She loved playing Bingo, playing the bells in their Chime Choir, listening to the old-time music, colouring with friends, and participating each year in the Butterfly Release. Even at 84, she was able to get a new smart phone and learned to text and keep in touch with friends near and far. Volunteers playing games with the seniors at Menno had to give her a handicap in order to give everyone else a chance at answering!

About a year ago, we all noticed Florence's up-until-now superior cognitive ability starting to falter. As time went by, she experienced acute distress over her memory lapses and inability to think coherently. Even so, she was able to cope with her increasing levels of pain and mind confusion as long as people could visit. Jake and Carol Stobbe, who knew Florence for over 45 years, and Gordon and Doris Carpenter, also dear friends of over 50 years, were faithful visitors. Mom loved her games and was always up for a game of Skip-bo, Boggle, Yahtzee, or Rack-o. She also enjoyed the 'outside' food people would bring her. Sometimes homemade meals, sometimes fast food, sometimes gourmet meals - she loved them all. She had a healthy appetite and thoroughly enjoyed good food!

With the onset of Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdown, the isolation really took a toll on her. The pain and loneliness were no longer easy to bear and increasing dementia made things more traumatic. She often expressed a will to "Go home to be with Jesus" these last few months. And, true to her nature, even some frustration that it was taking so long! Eventually, that longing took over the will to live and Florence passed peacefully to be with the Lord she served and adored.

Florence is pre-deceased by her parents, Tom and Ethel Thompson, her husbands, Joseph Vert and Gerald Hazel, sisters Eileen, Muriel, Lillian, and Lucille, and son, Daniel. She is survived by a brother, Tom (Jane) Thompson, her daughter, Janice (Phil Friesen), granddaughter Caitlind (Brent Tiefenbach) Meeks, grandson Kieran (Rachel Lindsay) Meeks, and her adored great-granddaughter, Gianna Rose Lindsay-Meeks. She also leaves behind her daughter-in-law, Karen (John) Murdoch, numerous step-children and grandchildren, cousins, nieces, nephews, great-nieces and nephews, and friends scattered across the globe.

A small Celebration of Life will be held on Tuesday August 4, 2:00 pm at the

Conference Centre, Best Western Inn (32110 Marshall Road, Abbotsford). Because of Covid-19 restrictions, attendance is limited to 30. Distancing will be enforced and we ask that all attendees wear masks. If you would like to attend, please contact Janice (call or text 778-808-5730).

A larger, more formal service will take place in Three Hills, Alberta in the future when larger gatherings can be held.

In lieu of flowers, we ask that donations be made to Menno Hospital in honour of mom. You may mail cheques to:

Menno Hospital

32945 Marshall Road, Abbotsford, BC V2S 1K1

Or you may donate online at:

www.mennoplace.ca. Look for the "Gratitude & Donations" heading in the top taskbar.

