



# Ester Claire Kathleen Clemo

(1934 - )

Ester Claire Kathleen was born on July 25, 1934 in Hong Kong to Alfred Bertrum and Daisy Caroline Clemo. Travelling between Hong Kong and Northern Ireland, Claire circumnavigated the world by the age of 19. Sponsored by her aunt who lived in Mission, she decided to immigrate to Canada in 1954.

Always an excellent student, Claire decided to resume her studies in the 1960s and after graduating with a Bachelor of Education from UBC in 1964, she embarked upon a remarkable teaching career spanning more than three decades that made her legendary throughout the community.

With exception of the year she taught in Burnaby (1964) and the one she took off to earn her Masters of Education (1991), Claire taught at Mission Central where she encouraged and motivated multitudes of young minds, guided by her principle: "As I teach I learn, and as I learn I teach." She believed that teachers were role models and considered herself "truly fortunate" that she had been "called to do one of the most important jobs in life – teaching the young."<sup>1</sup>

Her commitment included maintaining contact with many of her former students. She attended their graduation and tracked their careers and lives. Claire's personal archives include hundreds of cards, letters and photographs from them - a testament of their "utmost respect and affection for their friend and teacher"<sup>2</sup>

Her dedication to teaching and love for her students earned her the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal in 1978 and the Rotary Club Distinguished Service Award in 1991. During the presentation Rotarian Ed Betterton stated "in both her personal and professional life, Claire is an excellent example of a person who puts service to others above self. For the 30 years, she taught, cared for, and looked out for her students."<sup>3</sup>

Her goal "to light the lamp of learning and keep it lit,"<sup>1</sup> continues today through two scholarships in her name for graduates of Heritage Park Secondary and Mission Secondary pursuing a career in education and nursing.

In 2013, when Claire was made a Freeman of the City – the highest honour that can be awarded to a citizen by a municipality, she described teaching as the "great love of her life" and encouraged "everyone to keep learning because, regardless of age, there is always more to discover."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Fraser Valley Record, March 29, 1989; <sup>2</sup> Abbotsford Clearbrook Times, Sept. 22, 1993; <sup>3</sup> Fraser Valley Record, July 8, 1992; <sup>4</sup> District of Mission Freeman of the City Biography, April 27, 2013

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