



# Muriel Windebank

(1923 - )

"I stand at the top of James Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue and look out on the whole town, look out to Hatzic Prairie and the mountains and I try to envision what it was like in the very early days." Muriel Windebank, a native of Mission and active member of a pioneer family, happily reflects upon her 81-year residency. Born in the first Mission Memorial Hospital at 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Birch, Muriel still resides in the house she grew up in with her civic-minded father, W.J. Windebank, her loving mother, and siblings

As a child, she devoted much of her time to her passion for music, which ultimately became a central element of her lifelong participation in St. Andrew's United Church. Educated in Mission, Muriel attended Normal School after graduation. She then left for a short time to pursue a teaching career in rural Nakusp and Haney, but soon longed for the natural beauty and close-knit community of her hometown. Upon her return, Muriel taught primary grades for five years in Mission Central, the school she had attended as a child. Then she went to Victoria where she taught for an additional 3 years.

In 1953 she returned once more to Mission. Retiring from teaching, she joined the family business, W.J Windebank Ltd. and employed her skillful ingenuity to a full-time position as store clerk. Completely self-taught, Muriel educated customers on the technicalities of plumbing and electrical devices and went out of her way to provide excellent service, quickly establishing herself as the very capable "how-to" woman of First Avenue. After a 40-year career at her father's store, Muriel retired from the business in 1993 and promptly immersed herself in the history of the area.

Joining the Mission District Historical Society in 1994, she now researches, provides tours of the Museum, and writes articles on heritage spaces for the society newsletter. Muriel has become a community treasure for her volunteerism and extensive knowledge of municipal history. In 2003, she received an Honorary Membership from the Society in recognition of her impressive contributions. Her work with the "Places and Spaces" initiative, dedicated to preserving the history of the downtown core, is intimately important to her as Muriel has seen decades of transition fade the historic heartbeat of the town. "It is changing," she concludes, "and I think it should be held in memory."

**Copyright © 2004 by Mission District Historical Society**

*All rights reserved. No part of this work covered by copyright may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means without the prior written permission from the Mission District Historical Society.*

