



Flo Erskine

(1916 -)

“Smile all of the time and look on the sunny, funny side of life too because without a sense of humour you are lost.” These uplifting and unpretentious words are Flo Erskine’s guiding principles for life and living. Born in Alberni on December 7, 1916, she grew up in a loving family appreciative of the arts, cultivated by her mother who was a music teacher.

After completing her education in Alberni, she married James “Tom” Erskine in 1939 and gave birth to three sons. In 1954, Flo and her family moved to Mission where she became a “working mother.” She eventually got a job at Glenn’s Pharmacy, which later became Peoples Drug Mart, where she worked until her retirement 30 years later.

Although music was always a part of her life, it wasn’t until Flo arrived in Mission, however, that she fully developed her inborn talent to play by ear, discovered at the age of 2½. After being invited to join a local group called the “We Three,” Flo went on to play the piano at dances throughout the Fraser Valley building her skills to interpret, improvise and embellish a tune. She also joined the Mission Legion Pipe Band for whom she played the drums for over a decade.

Through her musical talent and immeasurable fondness for people, Flo has touched the lives of countless individuals as a volunteer at several seniors’ care homes. A member of the Mission Hospital Auxiliary for over 42 years, she still plays the piano weekly at the Extended Care Unit where she introduced the use of music therapy for residents in the 1960’s. “It will get through to people before words will. To see the pleasure it gives them – it’s like a miracle.”

More recently, Flo discovered the untapped power of the humble hug. Some years ago, she read a book advocating the therapeutic virtues of it. Since then she has become a hug therapist, not hesitating to give hugs to the staff a store she has patronized, then going down the line-up at the cash register, and hugging everyone there too. “That’s the nice thing about hugs. You go out of the store and everyone is smiling.” Not surprisingly, she is now known as the “Hug Lady of Mission.” Enjoying an enriched life through her many good deeds and caring children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and numerous friends, she earnestly states: “I would like to be remembered for caring about people, teaching them how to laugh if they haven’t laughed lately. I really want them to remember that I love Mission.”

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