



Hilda Hollister

(1924 - 2005)

Hilda, the second of four children, was born on a sugar plantation in Barbados on March 22, 1924 and moved to New York with her family at the beginning of the Great Depression. As a child and a teenager growing up in Brooklyn, Hilda developed a strong faith in God and a passion for dance. Church was an integral part of her family life while growing up. At the age of 16, she began to teach Sunday school and continued to do this in the different places she lived over the next 50 years. Hilda also loved to dance. When she was 13, she started a dancing school for children in her neighbourhood. At the age of 19, she choreographed a group of ladies to entertain soldiers at an army base on Long Island.

Hilda got married in 1945 and had two children, Susan and Edward. After 15 years, the marriage ended and she moved with her children to Arizona where she worked as a Steno Reporter for the Employment Security Commission. She met Vic Hollister in 1966 and married him the following year.

In 1970 they moved to Canada when Vic was transferred by his company to manage an office in Vancouver and Toronto. Ten years later he retired early to work as a consultant and Hilda became his secretary and treasurer. In 1983, the happily married couple moved to Mission, where she "created a legacy of hope in the community." Described by friends "as a lady of vision," Hilda saw opportunities and seized them to make a lasting difference. Her friends in Mission have also noted that she made a special effort to assist those in need from all segments of society, ranging from immigrants to senior citizens to a woman who had been traumatized because of an abusive childhood. She also made significant contributions to the work of many local community groups including the Rotary Club, the Mission's Library Committee, the Mission Literacy Association, and the Mission Hospice.

At Mission's St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, Hilda served as an elder, led bible studies, and directed the choir for 17 years, using her "lovely soprano voice" to train both children and adults to sing. She also taught Sunday school and vacation bible school classes. Pastor Robin Ross recalls "Some of our students recall her as the best teacher they had ever had. She was also part of almost every group at the church."

Hilda and her husband Vic were also passionate about advancing educational opportunities for students. "We saw a need and we did what we could to fill it," she once said to *The Vancouver Sun*. She established a reading program in local libraries and taught English to new immigrants to Mission. They also gave of their time and money generously to establish a program to increase math and science proficiency in Mission Schools, to upgrade the nursing equipment at the University College of the Fraser Valley, to establish scholarship programs at Trinity Western University and to establish the Clarke Foundation Theatre. Moreover, they encouraged youth from Mission to pursue post-secondary education by donating more than \$200,000 to institute scholarships for local students. For their philanthropic contributions, they received both the District of Mission's Lifetime Achievement Award and the provincial Lighthouse Award in 2005.

Hilda passed away on September 19, 2005 at the age of 81 after battling cancer for more than 10 years. She is survived by 4 living children, 10 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren. For more than 2 decades, she touched the lives of so many through her "entrepreneurialism and philanthropy, and her love for the people of Mission. Her accomplishments are truly her legacy."

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