Louise Collington Hughes
(1918 - 2008)

Born in Brandon, Manitoba, Louise had just graduated from secretarial school, when she visited a girlfriend who had also just graduated – from nursing school. She surprised her parents by completing and returning an application for a three-year program at Misericordia School of Nursing in Winnipeg. She graduated in 1941 and elected private duty nursing at $4 a day over the $25 a month then paid to hospital staff nurses.

Louise joined the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps in 1942 as Nurse Lieutenant, first posted to the Shilo Military Hospital in Manitoba. Crossing the Atlantic in 1943, she joined the nursing staff of the Leavesden Military Hospital near Watford, England, and after D-Day 1944, went with #20 Canadian General Hospital into Belgium and Holland.

She came home to Brandon and the next year Louise enrolled at UBC to obtain her B.S.N. in Public Health in 1947. Her first job was with the Langley Health Unit in 1948 – the year of The Flood – which saw her travelling throughout the Fraser Valley by rowboat to inoculate school children against Diphtheria.

Louise met Bud Hughes at an Anglican Young People's Association function, and they were married in October 1948. Louise continued to work in Public Health until Sydney arrived in 1954. Owen was born in 1956. It was 1961 when the family moved to their Mission home, built by Bud soon after Valley Lumber had transferred him to Mission.

Louise joined the Mission Hospital Auxiliary that same year, and was elected President in 1963, then provincial President in 1973 and national President in 1980. "At the time, the National represented only five of the provinces, but by the end of my (two year) term, I'd brought them all into our organization" she proudly recalled. She still enjoyed the work and her colleagues as much as ever after almost 50 years of continuous service.   As a 20-year member of the Mission Memorial Hospital Board, Louise also sat on the BC Health Association Board and the Canadian Hospital Association Foundation Board. In Mission, she chaired many committees, was board chair from 1971 – 1974, and was elected a Life Member in 1982. She was a driving force behind the construction of the current hospital, which opened in 1965.

Louise also found time to be an energetic member and President of the Anglican Church Women, and she was the founding President of the Mission Figure Skating Club. Among the many things she did, Louise was particularly proud of her work with the Stroke Club, which she founded in 1982. She continued as co-ordinator for 10 years, eventually becoming President of the BC Stroke Association.

In 1975, International Women's Year, Louise was presented with the BC Health Association Meritorious Service Award, and then the Queen's Medal in 1977 for service to Canadian health care. Her son Syd had this to say about his mother: "My mother saw a need and fulfilled it… She believed in the community and worked quietly for the good of everyone." Louise was nominated as a person who "made great contributions in service to her community, her province and to her country. Certainly, she stands as one who deserves local recognition as an outstanding member of our community and a pathfinder who led others in service."

A Program of the Mission Community Archives to Document the Women of Our Community
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