



Pat Morrice's story of

# Elsie



The year was 1898 in the town of Great Falls Montana U.S.A. A baby girl was born to Hugh and Julia Jackson. This wee baby weighing 3lbs 10 oz was baptized Elsie Harlow, a sister to Pearl. After bringing Elsie home from hospital her devoted parents kept her warm and cozy in their little kitchen beside the coal and wood stove. She began to gain a little weight and would one day reach the height of 5 feet and weigh 98 pounds. Elsie and Pearl's parents were Salvation Army officers. When Elsie and Pearl were three and five years old they were ready to join their parents on the carriers of their bicycles to ride from village to village to feed the hungry and save a few souls; "Remember the little drum and the tambourine called Dad". We had fun riding on the bikes and playing the drums and the tambourine at each stop we made". After three years of biking from town to town the family moved to Vancouver B.C. Elsie was a robust six year old all ready to start school in this new city. The little family found a home with other Salvation Army families in the Strathcona area of the city. In the year 1904 the two girls attended Seymour School. Elsie was a little shy and found it hard to adjust to too many new experiences. However they became good students and soon had new friends among their classmates of various nationalities. They lived close to their parent's place of work called the Salvation Army Citadel. On special occasions the Family would pack a picnic, hop on their bikes and spend a day at Stanley Park.

Towards the end of her years at Seymour school. Elsie won a very special award. The prize was a beautiful edition of "Hiawatha" which she treasured for many years. As the years progressed electric street cars became the mode of travel. In the summer holidays the family would plan a day at Kitsilano Beach. They would enjoy swimming and later have a little camp fire, roast hot dogs and marshmallows on a stick.

The return home was magical. As we walked along the pathways the tree branches appeared to be sprinkled with fairy dust as the starlight and moonbeams guided our path. The following August we then moved to Nanaimo. I do not remember much about it except we lived near a coal mine. I would sometimes hear a siren. That would mean there was an accident in the mine. My parents were kept busy helping the families cope with their fears and sometimes grief. We stayed in Nanaimo for two years.

A letter arrived requesting the family to think carefully about entering a new and perhaps difficult missionary work in the region of Hazelton and Glen Vowell. This would mean a much longer stay with few resources to rely on. The parents were concerned for their young teen daughters. However we thought of this as a real adventure and had little knowledge of the hardships ahead. We were given a rather generous clothing allowance which we had great fun spending. A lot of very warm clothes were on the list. My parents had many lists for provisions and necessities of life. By September we were ready to leave. We boarded the Union Steamship S.S. Catalla. We had family time with meals on board for two whole days. After docking in Prince Rupert our journey continued in a horse and buggy along very bumpy dirt roads. Our driver was struggling to keep us all upright as he swerved from one pot hole to the next. We finally arrived in Hazelton only to be told that our real destination was the village of Glen Vowell. We were a weary family when we arrived at the mission house. Nothing daunted my parent's enthusiasm for new beginnings. They were soon inviting the children of the village to come to visit the school in the Mission House. They gradually learned some of the Native words and were soon communicating through music.

As time went on Elsie and her sister started helping teach the children some English words and the children taught them their games and dances. Wildlife abounded and 10 mile hikes became a way of life. Shooting the Skeena river rapids in a wooden canoe, guided by trusted natives was always an exciting adventure for the two sisters. Every two years the family took a vacation outside of the Native village but was always happy to return.

During the ten year stay in Glen Vowell they developed many friends among the Native people as well as a few groups of white neighbors. A hospital was built and Elsie assisted the nurses and Doctor whenever she was needed. In 1918 after the First World War was over Elsie and Pearl returned to Vancouver. Elsie was in poor health and needed several major operations. Elsie's Mum came down from the North to help her in her recovery. After a few years she was working as a kindergarten assistant and a dental nurse. Hospital bills had mounted up. She needed two part time positions to help pay her bills.

In 1928 Elsie married my Dad; they lived in a lovely home in Point Grey. Unfortunately the great Depression arrived in 1929 and they lost their home. They moved into a nice little apartment in the West end of Vancouver, near to English Bay. In the year 1930 I was born. Mum and I would often walk to the beach. We stayed near the beach for about five years until my Dad developed Tuberculosis. He was sent to tranquil hospital in Kamloops for three years.

My Grandma and Grandpa moved from the North and bought a nice home in Kitsilano. They graciously invited Mum and I to come and live with them. I started school at the age of six, and a number of my friends often went to the movies on Saturday afternoon. My Mum suggested to my friends to come along for a trip to the local park instead of a movie. This park was surrounded by green rolling hills. We climbed to the very top. We felt as if you could see forever. Mum suggested a roll down the hill. What fun! After much laughter we laid down and watched the clouds go by. There were parades of bears, elephants, giraffes and monkeys swinging from trees all in the world of make believe on top of a grassy green hill on a warm autumn day. Mums' sense of wonder and imagination was later passed on to her four grandchildren. During the next years Mum wrote many letters to Dad and I sent drawings. He was always pleased to receive our letters and wrote us from his hospital bed. He expressed in all his letters that he missed us dearly.

Four years later Dad was released from hospital. We decided to go on a little holiday in Dads' car. He was a lumber salesman and needed to visit some logging camps in the Okanagan.

The Caribou highway was a very narrow, twisting road. We experienced some very scary twists and turns along the highway but made it to our destination quite safely, thanks to Dads careful driving. After returning to Grandma and Grandpa's home in Kitsilano Dad went on another trip. To everyone's shock the police arrived with sad news. Dad had experienced a fatal heart attack.

Mum was now a widow. We were always glad that we had taken the holiday together the past year.

During the next ten years Mum led a quiet life caring for both my grandparents, who were in poor health; however it did not stop their Salvation Army friends from visiting. They were all very friendly and full of joy whenever they visited. It helped keep our spirits up. Mums' sister Pearl also visited occasionally. After both grandparents died Mum continued living in the family home and had a suite built to increase her income. Her life was less lonely with friends renting the suite. She also volunteered at the well baby clinic and kept busy in her large garden. Her social life also improved.

In the year 1949 I entered Nurses training at St. Paul's Hospital. I stayed in the Nurses residence for three years and graduated in 1952. Mum was always very hospitable to the student nurses and often invited the out of town student's to her house for a good home cooked meal as our hospital food was unappetizing. It was a hard three years of study and training at the hospital. Mum always lightened our spirits with her happy welcoming smile.

The following year after graduation I went to California to nurse in the pediatric ward. My Mum helped me with a lot of things when I was in nursing. She even planned my wedding for me. It was a relaxed and enjoyable time for all of us. We lived in Cranbrook, my husband was a teacher and this was his first school. We always came home for Christmas and holidays. Three years later we returned to our Kitsilano home and built a second suite in Moms home. Soon Mum had three grandchildren and helped us out as much as needed, as I was working evening shifts at St. Paul's hospital.

The year was 1959 when Ron – my husband, completed building our new home in Dollerton. A special memory comes to mind. We were busy parents of three little boys under five years of age. Ron was teaching school, I was taking night school courses to become a pre-school teacher so the person who was a god send was my Mother. She would drive up in her little mini Morris Minor with her arms loaded with baking. She would always brighten our day as the children ran to her with lots of hugs and kisses. She entertained them with her exciting stories and involved them in imaginative play. What would I have done without her! She was always available in times of crises. Our youngest son was ill every three weeks of his life for 21 years. Mum was available to give cheer support and love. One day when I was visiting Rick-our son in hospital he said to me, "I always listen for Grandmas' heels on the hospital floor. They go "clickity click clickity click and then I know she is almost here. "That makes me real happy."

Nine years later our new baby girl arrived whom all the boys loved and cherished. In 1968 Mum offered to care for little Sandy –our daughter, who was two years old while we took the boys on a camping trip to Expo in Montreal. It was a great experience for the whole family. Mum loved and cherished little Sandy.

One person's life can make a difference. That was my Mum.