

In one of my recent trollings through the “black hole” of FaceBook, I casually shared a post that reflected how bored I was feeling at the time. (Something about standing on my front porch, knocking on the door, then stepping back inside, opening the door... and finding no one there). I know – pretty silly, right? But it amused me at the time.

Eagle-eyed Peggy Morgan, (administrator extraordinaire for the Arts Council), spotted my post and immediately challenged me to write something for the Arts Council newsletter. She thought it might “keep boredom at bay”. Challenge accepted.

Many people have used many adjectives to describe the times in which we find ourselves: extraordinary, unprecedented, life-altering, weird, stressful, eventful, unusual, senseless, etc., etc., etc. I won't add to that list here. However, to put things into some perspective, I'd like to share some of my family's history.

My father's father was killed in France in August 1917 during the battle of Hill 70, leaving my grandmother a widow at age 28 with two young children to raise. Almost exactly one year later, her favourite brother was killed during the final 100-day push of the Great War. Then, in February, 1920, her young daughter died in the second wave of the Spanish flu epidemic. She was five years old. And, finally, in September of that same year, her father died of natural causes.

In the space of just over three years, my grandmother lost her husband, her brother, her daughter and her father. Prior to these soul-crushing events, she had lost her eldest brother to sun-stroke at a barn-raising in 1901. And in 1909, her mother died three days after a devastating fire which completely destroyed the family home and business.

I have often asked myself, “How did she survive all of that?” But, survive she did. She eventually re-married, and lived until the early 1960's. Her very strong faith and her love of music were definitely contributing factors to her strength of character. Among her many achievements, she was the organist of Streetsville United Church for many years, and President of the local Women's Institute. She was a tireless volunteer in the community, and she also played a key role in

building a very successful business with her second husband, my step-grandfather.

I am fortunate that I have some very distinct memories of my grandmother, including driving country roads at the cottage (she was only 5 feet tall and could barely see over the steering wheel), New Year's Day dinners (she always cooked a goose), and her allowing me to "type" on her ancient Underwood typewriter. (I felt very grown-up).

When I think of the current difficulties we face, I call on my grandmother's example as a beacon of light in the darkness. She was an outstanding role-model for me and my siblings, as well as for many others. I only wish that I had known her longer so that I could have asked more questions about her life. I was seven when she died.

In the summer of 2017, two of my nieces, and my three siblings and I visited my grandfather's grave in France, where we deposited a small amount of earth which we brought from my grandmother's grave in Streetsville. We also brought back some earth from his grave which now rests with her in Streetsville. As my oldest brother said, "Together at last". Life does, indeed, come full circle.

I know that we will come through this time stronger, kinder, and more aware of how we behave in the world. I take strength from my grandmother who, if she were here, would be doing everything she could to ease the burden of those who are having the most difficulty in coping with this pandemic.

Thank you, Ena, for being my grandmother.

Ena Myrtle May (Graydon) Clipperton. November 16, 1888 – January 6, 1961.

Michael Clipperton

May, 2020.