

Opinion

MUSKOKA MOSAIC

Introducing Violet Earl

BY PAULA BOON

Violet Earl says she's had a wonderful life.

Through the years, the mother of 15, grandmother of 36, great-grandmother of 34 and soon-to-be-great-great-grandmother of two has always been busy and fulfilled. "I did a lot of driving when the kids were younger, I'm telling you, between Girl Guides and hockey," she says with a laugh.

Earl fondly recalls weeding the garden with her children and having contests like who could find the longest piece of twitch grass. "There's great joy in it," she says of raising a large family. "They fight, but they always come together when there's an emergency."

They come together at other times, too. For example, since Earl suffered from congestive heart failure last summer, the 11 of her children who live in this area have arranged things so that someone brings her dinner every night and then stays to keep her company while she eats it. When she recently told her son that she had recovered enough to prepare dinner on her own, he said, "Why get rid of a good thing when you've got it?"

Earl appreciates her children's efforts. "They're busy people with busy lives," she says.

And so is she. The oldest living member of the Huntsville Agricultural Society, Earl has been a director for 45 years. As well, she was secretary-treasurer of District 11, which covers 16 fairs, for 15 years. "I just gave that up this year," she says. "I'm quite a one for fairs."

At age nine, Earl won a trophy for skinning a rabbit more quickly than anyone else. "I've won a few other trophies and ribbons over the years, too," she says, "best apple pie, best chocolate cake and so on."

Earl has also donated a trophy to the Huntsville Fall Fair in memory of her husband Kenneth, who died of a stroke in 1990. "He was such a wonderful person," she says. "He always believed in shaking hands with people; he never signed a contract in his life until the last couple of years. He didn't believe it was necessary."

Earl can also be found knitting and crocheting whenever she has a free moment. On top of the 60-odd pairs of mitts she makes each Christmas for her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, she builds up a large stockpile of other knitted goods to sell. "I used to do craft shows, but now people just come to me," she says. "Last year after the early Christmas service at the church, I sold \$180 worth of goods to last-minute shoppers."

Displayed in her store-room are colourful and beautiful sweaters, dolls, afghans, mittens, aprons, socks, mobiles, stockings, you name it. When asked about the \$40 price tag on a knitted afghan, Earl says, "You can't go by how



much time it takes you. Nobody could afford it."

Although her hands get sore now and she has to rest often, knitting is still her number one pastime.

A breast cancer survivor, Earl also seizes every opportunity to urge other women to get mammograms. While she surprised doctors by surviving fairly aggressive cancer, she lost her daughter Joan to the disease several years ago. "Cancer is an awful disease. It strikes everybody," she says.

Nowadays, Earl lives in an apartment with a son and his wife just upstairs. Her walls are covered in photos of her parents, husband and many family members, as well as a framed, handwritten letter from King George V of England thanking Earl's father for his service during the First World War and wishing him a quick recovery from his injury. "Not many people have those," she says.

And, at 84, the long-time St. John's Anglican Church member has no worries about the future. "I have a great faith that when I go, I'll meet my husband," she says. "I can't wait for that." Then she laughs. "I guess I shouldn't say that, but I just mean it's been a good life and I'm not afraid of what comes next."

LETTERS

Voting by mail does not guarantee democracy

Allowing people to vote in municipal elections by mail in no way, shape or form ensures the democratic process is fair.

The mail-in ballot has resulted in a loss of autonomy for the people who live in this area permanently. Canada will send political observers all over the world to ensure elections are held fairly and by secret ballot, that people are not intimidated or have someone looking over their shoulder telling them how to vote.

Democracy can only be ensured and safeguarded through secret ballot, ensuring only the person who marks the ballot knows how they voted.

The mail-in ballot is totally against the fundamental principle of democracy. There is no way to ensure that the person to whom the ballot was sent receives it. There is no way to ensure that the person the ballot was addressed to is the one who marks the ballot and, most of all, that the individual is not marking the ballot under the direction or

intimidation of another individual.

The mail-in ballot was intended to make it easier to vote and increase voter turnout. Democracy is not without a price, and the potential loss of democracy is too high a price to pay simply to make it more convenient for some to vote.

In the last federal and provincial elections we were required to provide identification before being allowed to mark our ballot.

One man, one woman, one vote, by secret ballot, where your permanent residence is. That's true democracy, no matter how inconvenient for some.

The pendulum has swung too far. It has gone from seasonal residents having a say to running the show.

I will be holding a public meeting on Jan. 31 at 1 p.m. in the McKellar Community Centre. Everyone is welcome to come and discuss this issue.

Gord Zulak
McKellar

There's only one song that truly represents Canada

There is a contest going on, run by CBC, to name the 49 songs that most represent Canadian culture (49 because of the 49th parallel), and these songs will be played on CBC on Jan. 20, inauguration day, to let Obama know who we are. So, I have written the following piece.

Some friends and colleagues and I have given this matter considerable thought. All of us being Canadians, we organized and set up a loose-structured confederation to evaluate and make recommendations. The new ad hoc group is called Canadian Almost Royal Commission Assessing Songs and Singers, or CARCASS.

Our first conclusion was that the words "Canadian" and "culture" are not mutually exclusive, nor do they form an oxymoron.

It was then suggested that we search for a song title that truly represented the culture and aspirations of Canadian society.

However, unfortunately, we could not find a song entitled *We are Canadian — If it Doesn't Offend Anyone for Us to Say So*.

The closest title we could find that seemed appropriate was *I'm Sorry*, but since it was recorded by Brenda Lee, and not by Shania Twain, we had to reject it.

After truly serious thought and discussion, we have come to the conclusion that there is in fact one and only one song that does indeed represent Canada, by the dynamic nature and personality of the singer, by the lyrics, and by the historical significance of the song. And that song is *Northwest Passage* by the late Stan Rogers. No other contenders even came close. It certainly should be at or near the top of any list of 49 songs that truly represent our country.

Mike Yale
North York, Ontario

In defense of Mendelson Joe

Re: Letters raise reader's ire, letter, *Huntsville Forester*, January 7

As a constant reader of the Forester, I would like to say that I enjoy Mendelson Joe's letters. He writes with passion about issues he feels strongly about. I don't always agree with him, but even his most strident letters are entertaining and thought-provoking. Mendelson Joe is a prolific artist who produces powerful works in several mediums. He also has a long history of informed activism.

If Mr. Clayton disagrees with Mendelson Joe's opinions, he might consider an actual criticism of those opinions or the facts they

are based on. Mr. Clayton's insinuations about recent events in the House of Commons are not only baseless, they're irrelevant, as anyone with a basic understanding of the parliamentary system would know. And referring to "...those stupid letters from Mendelson Joe" is hardly an intelligent critique.

I know that some people find articulate, opinionated artists — like Mendelson Joe — challenging. They nudge us out of our comfort zone and make us think. I believe our society is better for it.

Doug Banwell
Huntsville

Ontario cannot afford to keep Caplan as minister of health

Editor's note: this is a copy of a letter that was sent to Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care David Caplan.

It is one thing to appoint a supervisor for a specific hospital that has been poorly run and, as such, poses unnecessary risks to patients therein. However, it is quite another to appoint supervisors to replace publicly elected boards such as has happened in Midland-Penetanguishene, Alliston and Scarborough. In the Midland-Penetanguishene case, your supervisor fired a member of the newly appointed (not elected) hospital board because she supported elected boards.

Your ministry and Premier Dalton McGuinty have gone too far with putting

into place appointed bodies, i.e. the LHINs and specific elected hospital boards which are now being replaced by appointed supervisors and boards responsible to cabinet and not directly to the local public. You have exceeded your democratic authority in this matter.

Therefore, I believe that you should resign your post as minister of health immediately. Your decisions have been very undemocratic and very wasteful of tax dollars — into the millions — e.g. the numerous P3 hospitals like Brampton and North Bay. We simply cannot afford to have you as our minister of health any longer!

Alan Bangay
Bracebridge

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

E-mail: letters@huntsvilleforester.com

When sending letters to the editor be sure to include your name, address and phone number. Unsigned letters cannot be used.



HEALTHCARE HEROES

Kawartha Credit Union



Kawartha Credit Union, with several branches north of Huntsville, have been long-time supporters of the Hospital Foundation and now have a new branch in Huntsville. Kawartha Credit Union have donated over \$28,000 to the Hospital Foundation. Barb Smith, Manager of the Huntsville Branch (centre left) and her staff continue their support by presenting Debi Davis, Executive Director of the HDMH Foundation (far left) with a cheque for \$3,500.

Thanks Kawartha.

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