

Clarence & Violet (Brillinger) Martin

The ties that bind this family to the town of Stayner go back many years.

James and Eva (Mitchell) Martin came to Nottawasaga circa 1920 from Orillia via Toronto. James's family had settled in Newcastle, Ontario, having come to Canada from Northern Ireland. Eva's family were from Medonte township near Orillia. James and Eva had 10 children; Clarence, Percy, Ernie, Ed, Filena, Gertie, Harry, Laurine, Sid and Dorothy. Their first home in the area was the "Burkholder place" on the Nottawasaga town line near the sand hills, and the children attended Buckingham school. Later they moved to Sunnidale to the "Bristow place" on Highway 26, then the "Taylor place" on the Sunnidale Road and finally to the farm at the White Rose gas station across Highway 26 from Edenvale Airport.

Eli and Ruth (Copeland) Brillinger came to the 2nd line (Airport Road) of Nottawasaga, just south of town, in 1910 from the 4th line where Eli had built a home to which he brought his bride in 1898. Eli's family had come to the Nottawasaga German (Tunker) settlement from Markham in the mid 1800's. Ruth's family came from the Honeywood area with roots in England and Ireland. Eli and Ruth started their family at the beginning of the last century with twin boys, Harvey and Harold, then Violet, Roy, Fred and Reta. The Brillingers had several farms on the 2nd line and the children all attended SS 23 School across one field from their home.

Clarence and Violet finished Grade 8 "the Entrance". They both would have liked more education had it not been for their families needing them to help out at home. Clarence probably would have chosen to be a minister, and Violet dreamed of being a nurse. Violet helped with the workload of a busy farm, younger siblings and boarders (mostly teachers at SS 23). Clarence worked for local farmers, on the western harvest, and sailed the Great Lakes as a ship's cook. In the late 1920's, he began work at Blackburn's grocery store and egg-grading station in Stayner. Purina Feeds became a strong focus of this business and Clarence took advantage of the opportunities it offered for learning about livestock nutrition. He attended educational conferences in St. Louis, MO, and then passed along his knowledge to the farms when he delivered the feed. He probably had a healthy heart because of all those 50 lb. bags of Purina feed slugged over the years. Clarence remained at Blackburn's until retirement.

Clarence and Violet met at Young Peoples at Jubilee Presbyterian Church where both families attended. They were married at the Brillinger farm on June 21, 1933 by Rev. Wm Coutts making their first home on the Warrington Road at Jane St. Violet had a weekly housekeeping budget of \$2.00. Their first child, Doug, was born at the Doner Materity Home at 279 John St., then two years later their first daughter, Betty, was born in their second home at 322 Main St. E. Barbara and Jacqueline were both delivered by Dr. Murphy in Collingwood Hospital. In 1944 the family moved across the lawn to 320 Main and they lived there for the next 40 years.

Jubilee continued to be a focal point in the lives of Clarence and Violet and their family over the years. Clarence sang bass in the choir, cultivating his love of classical and sacred music. He was Sunday School superintendent for many years and valued the opportunity to serve his church as a member of the Kirk Session. Clarence set up a bursary at Jubilee to support young people who were interested in the ministry.

Violet was a "Willing Worker", baking innumerable dinner rolls and butter tarts, sewing aprons for "the Bazaar", and cooking many a pot of scalloped potatoes for potluck suppers. As a lifetime member of WMS she was still driving "the older ladies" to the meetings when she herself was in her 70's. When she died in 1982, donations were made in her memory to the Sunday School.

Clarence's contribution to community life reflected the motto ".rent due for space occupied..". Many a Stayner boy remembers being in Cubs under Clarence's leadership as Akela. Clarence obtained permission to have a camping area north of town up past Shaw's Chicken Hatchery and behind Maguire's bush (near the present day sewage treatment lagoon).The boys trimmed trails and set out bird feeding stations leaving many of the boys with an interest in bird watching and maintaining feeders. He was in the Reserve Army during World War II spending his summer holidays at Niagara-on-the-Lake at training camp.

He was a dedicated volunteer fireman becoming fire chief first in Stayner and later in Sunnidale Township having qualified by attending Fire College in Bracebridge. He followed in family footsteps as a member of the Orange Lodge, where in addition to Lodge duties, Clarence and Violet both enjoyed social events such as square dancing, potluck suppers and euchre parties. During the local plebiscite for alcohol in Stayner, he was chairman of the "Dry Committee". The family well remembers the Sunday morning they awoke to find their lawn littered with empty whiskey bottles. In later years, Clarence became an active member of the Horticultural Society taking great pride in each town flowerbed he tended.

Clarence had an interest in the Parkinson Foundation, as he suffered with Parkinson's Disease himself. He was treated by Dr. Tasker who was a leader in the treatment of Parkinson patients in the middle of the century.

Clarence started a family tradition in 1967 when he ran the reactivated Duntroon to Stayner Road Race and won the master's division. For the next twenty-five years, some member of the family ran or walked this race. It became a celebration of family, of Stayner, and of Clarence's birthday. In 1991, after his passing, the grandchildren planted a tree, in the park at the new arena, in his memory.

Violet cared for others and often dropped in on those who needed a cheery smile. She loved to visit with her neighbours Vera Millsap, Hattie Plowright and Annie Besse. She was often referred to as a "Pollyanna" later in life by her children.

Her enterprising endeavours took place from home. For a number of years, rooms were leased to girls who needed a place "in town" such as Ruth Gilchrist and Elta and Lola Rogers among others. She also had boarders on different occasions over the years. Many a weary beachcomber found a place to stay on a summer weekend at Martin's Tourist Home.

Violet was primarily a homemaker who enjoyed cooking, sewing and gardening but she especially loved children. Friends were welcome and "Mom" was always there. Her family was the focus of her life both children and grandchildren. The grandchildren looked forward to coming to Stayner to see Gramma and Grampa and to play with their cousins. She engendered the bonding of her grandchildren and this bonding continues to this day with the G2 (generation 2) traveling letter that keeps her grandchildren in touch with one another as well as creating an archive of family news, views and memories.

The James Martin family started a family gathering in 1946 when Ed returned from overseas. This Family Reunion has continued without a break. In 1997, the 50th year was celebrated. This was the year of the first audio taping of family memories. What fun to sit and reminisce and tape for the future.

None of Clarence and Violet's family live in the friendly town at this time. Violet's sister Reta Dickey helps us keep in touch as do Clarence's sisters Filena Mills and Rene Whitley. All of us from the oldest to the youngest have happy memories of the town we knew as home.