

Frances Grace Ford

A sad event occurred in Stayner in March when life-long resident, Grace Ford, died. The following appeared in the Stayner Sun, and we reprint it here with permission.

GRACE FORD, the winner of last year's Thomas Stayner Award, died on Saturday. She was 87.

Daughter-in-law Tish Ford told The Sun on Monday that Ford died of liver, lung and bone cancer. She was diagnosed in early December and subsequently moved to Stayner Nursing Home, where she passed away on the weekend.

The award she received at last year's Stayner Chamber of Commerce Business Awards ceremony was special to her, her daughter-in-law said.

Judges selected Grace based on a 14-year commitment to the Stayner Public Library Board.

Many other things she was involved with helped her win as well. She was a volunteer driver for the Children's Aid Society (CAS), ferrying wards to appointments and did work through United Church Women.

"Her enthusiasm toward her town and its heritage is unending, and she is an individual who possesses a very strong community spirit and has definitely made a difference to Stayner and the lives of its citizens," Ford's daughter-in-law wrote when nominating her last year. She recounted Monday that her mother-in-law was "a very caring and outspoken person. No one pulled the wool over Grace's eyes. If she had something to say she said it. You always knew where you stood."

Grace Johnson was born and raised in Stayner. She attended Byng Public School and subsequently Stayner Continuation School. Her parents were Vern and Eva Johnson. Ford's dad was a tailor, who had a business where R.C. Robinson Mens Wear is now located on Main Street.

Growing up and as a young woman Ford loved to play sports. "She played hockey, baseball, whatever was going back then she enjoyed it," Tish Ford said.

Helen Hanna, 87, Ford's best friend, recalled the first time they met. "We've been friends for over 75 years. They'd moved to a new house on John Street and I'd heard there were two little kids there. So I lived on John Street too and I went up the walk and there she was standing out front," Hanna said. Growing up the two played sports together and as adults were often in each other's company, Hanna said, adding she was a bridesmaid in Ford's wedding.

Ford lived most of her life in Clearview Township, except for a few brief stints, including one when she worked building airplanes for the deHavilland Aircraft Company in Toronto during the Second World War. "She was always very good with her hands. It was not uncommon for her to fix things at my place," her friend said.

She married her husband Fred shortly after the war ended and the couple lived on a farm at Sunnidale Corners for 20-plus years, until moving back to town. The Stayner home was the one Ford grew up in as a little girl, Hanna said.

"She loved Stayner too — it was her favourite place. She was a big believer in buying locally, which I guess stems from when her dad was in business." Hanna noted her friend was also a good mother. She raised two boys, Tom and John.

"She also cherished every moment with her grandchildren and great grandchildren," Tish Ford said.

In terms of entertainment she loved to play cards, although Helen said she thought Ford enjoyed the social aspect more than the game itself. Reading was another favourite thing, her daughter-in-law said. Ford was a big diary writer as well and kept one since she was a youngster.

Helen Hanna said she will miss her friend dearly.

(This story first appeared in the Spring 2006 issue of our newsletter.)