

## Seniors' Spotlight

# Love and music: Eleanor Cooper

By Jenn Watt

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When Eleanor Cooper was a child, her home was filled with music and love. The second of four girls, Eleanor doesn't remember a time when sweet melodies didn't fill the air of her home. Eighty-two years later, that is still the case.

Eleanor was born an Owens, the daughter of Elsie and Neilson, of Maple Lake.



"Mom had come from Barrie ... to teach at Maple Lake. Dad was a Carnarvon boy," she says.

The first three girls, Kathleen, Eleanor and June, were born with the assistance of a midwife; the fourth, Mavis, at the Red Cross Outpost Hospital.

"Dr. Jamieson was the doctor and she kept Mom and the baby alive. Mavis was only a pound and a half. She put the oven door down and had Mavis in some kind of container all lined with soft things. She would oil her every day, apparently. She has a light bulb at a proper distance with just enough heat," Eleanor recalls.

"By that time we were living at Kushog Lake, Dad had built a house on Highway 35."

Elsie brought a piano from Barrie to her Highlands home, which the children took turns learning on.

"Dad taught Kathleen how to chord on the piano. She would be five or six. He played the fiddle. And there was always music from the time I can remember," she says.

Eleanor learned piano and clarinet.

By the time she was six, they had moved to Barrie. Although she had been a country girl up to that point, Eleanor doesn't remember much adjustment.

"It seemed pleasant to me. Not to Kathleen. She said there are too many people and too much noise and I'm going to move back to Haliburton as soon as I can. By golly, she wound up at the Frost Centre as receptionist/secretary there for 31 years," she laughs.

By the time Eleanor was an adult, she too was headed back to Haliburton. She had gone to teacher's college and got a job in Irondale at the one-room schoolhouse in 1954.

A year later she got a job in West Guildford at the school there.

It wasn't long until she met Earl Cooper.

"My girlfriend [Beth] and I were helping Ab LaRue serve hamburgers at the stand [at the Rotary carnival] and somebody came along and Beth said you must meet Earl ... to which I paid absolutely no attention," she says.

"It wasn't until there was a wedding dance at West Guildford near the end of my first year teaching there and that's when we started going together."

A year and a half later they were married.

And they've been living harmoniously ever since – quite literally. Earl's family was just as musical as Eleanor's and their children also caught the bug. Now grown, the Coopers children were also serious about education. George went into geology, Alan to theatre and music, Beth studied language and then massage thereapy; and Andy went to Royal Roads and then served in the Navy for 22 years.

The couple has eight grandchildren – four girls and four boys.

After having her children, Eleanor decided she'd like to go back to school and earned a diploma in theology by correspondence.

I was so tired of writing at that time I thought if I ever get through this writing there are three things I want to do: I want to join little theatre; I want to write for the *Echo*; I want to learn to weave. So, at the moment I have something on my looms."

Eleanor has been a longtime correspondent for the *Echo*, writing about the happenings in West Guilford. And as for little theatre, she discovered it was her passion.

"I was in a couple of musicals. I was in *Once Upon a Mattress*. I was in *Brigadoon*. I was in *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* and a couple of one-act plays and several comedies. 10 plays in all," She says.

"I just felt comfortable the moment I walked on stage. This is what I should have been doing all my life."

She is also a radio personality. Eleanor has been the voice of *Tell Me A Sunday Story* on Canoe FM for years. "I'm very proud of my association with Canoe and with the *Echo*," she says. And, she adds, she loves being part of Bill Gliddon's choir at St. George's Anglican Church.

Eleanor believes that her happy childhood created a strong foundation for the rest of her life.

"It's been fun to think of how Mom's face would light up when Dad came in the door."

*The Senior Spotlight feature recognizes local seniors who are nominated by CARP's local chapter in Haliburton.*