

"They were very, very close with one another," recalled Foote. Dr. Connor, who was their father's sister, delivered both Grace and Dorothy in the former family home at 52 Octavia St., said Foote. About a month later the family moved to Gallivan Road near Stirling and the sisters attended Marsh Hill School before moving to 240 Pinnacle St. They attended Belleville High School (the forerunner of Belleville Collegiate Institute and Vocational School), graduating with honours. Both then enrolled in a nursing program in Toronto and took an additional year of public health nursing.

They worked for the VON in Belleville until retiring around 1966 or 1967, believes Foote.

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— THERESA KELLAWAY

During the period Kellaway worked with them, Dorothy became the head nurse for Belleville and a three-mile radius. They operated the Well Baby Clinic and visited new mothers once a week for the first six weeks to teach them how to properly care for infants. They also changed dressing for people and Kellaway recalled they gave one diabetic person his insulin injection. Back then the VON had three full-time and one part-time nurse, said Kellaway.

Foote would periodically take them out for lunch and it wasn't uncommon for someone to approach them and say, "I know you don't know me, but my mom says you saved my life when (I was) young," recalled Foote. "People thought a great deal about them. They were very well regarded."

They were also known for the beautiful garden they maintained at their residence. In fact, they won an award from the Belleville Garden Club and were made honorary lifetime members, said Foote.

Kellaway said her work with the sisters made a lasting impression on her.

"They were two of the most humble, generous, kindest people I've ever worked with," said Kellaway. "They were excellent nurses and I couldn't say enough nice things about ladies." Their "beautiful flower garden" was analogous to their personalities, she said. Kellaway recalled the ladies going to church rummage sales and buying bed sheets and other items that they would give to patients.

"They were always very pleasant. I don't think I ever saw either of them in a bad mood." Within their profession, their standards were "very high."

"They knew their work and they gave it their all," said Kellaway. "They weren't as big as a minute. They were tiny in stature," said Kellaway, but apparently had great inner strength because she doesn't recall them ever taking sick days or even holidays. Having

been raised on a farm, says Kellaway, they knew about hard work. She believes when they were off work — and not in the garden — they were avid readers and attended church regularly. A trait that might not have been so evident to strangers was their humour.

"They had a good sense of humour and we had a lot of laughs, the three of us," recalled Kellaway. "They didn't lead a sheltered life by any means, but they were very contented ... I think they enjoyed good music. They enjoyed people ... (They had) just a small number of close friends." And of course they enjoyed each other's company.

The former Connor house is now owned by Paul and Catherine Kemp, who live there and operate the Green Willow Home, Gifts and Crafts business from the building.

Looking back some 50 years, Kellaway said the pair made a difference in the community.

"They were very private people but they were great to work with," said Kellaway. "They left a great imprint on my life ... The world was better off having had them, and people who knew them were better off for knowing them."