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Betty Cotton Still Has Faith

After nearly three decades of writing a religion column, Betty Cotton still has faith. Cotton has written her "Ecumenically Speaking" column in *The Chronicle-Journal* since the late 1970's. Every week, she sets out to educate people about religious issues and to share stories about people of faith doing good things.

Cotton has recently been selected for the Grand Prior's Commendation of the Order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem, an international, interdenominational Christian Order that works in ecumenism and medical care. The Thunder Bay Council of Clergy recommended Betty unanimously for the national recognition. "I think they thought of Betty Cotton right away because her article in *The Chronicle-Journal* is consistently inclusive of all faith communities and consistently hopeful and optimistic", said Tim Groulx, commander of the Order's Thunder Bay commandery.

"It means a lot to me," Cotton said. "I think any reporter is glad if the work they do is recognized by a credible body."

Cotton began writing for *The Chronicle-Journal* and the *Times News* in 1944, three years after she moved to Thunder Bay from Winnipeg. She started as the Vickers Heights correspondent and covered Neebing Council meetings. Cotton later wrote a humour column, before she was asked to cover religious news. "And after that, people didn't think I was funny any more," she deadpanned.

As a teenager, Cotton got involved in the ecumenical movement, which emphasizes the unity of all Christian denominations – or as Cotton sees it, all religions – working together. She draws inspiration from the people she writes about, from bishops to church volunteers who serve food to the homeless. One of her biggest thrills as a religion writer has been learning about other faiths, particularly as people of other religious backgrounds moved into Thunder Bay.

Even after 60 years of writing, Cotton isn't letting up. "I thought of quitting many times," she said. "Then I found out that people are reading it, and I think, OK, that's good. If people are encouraged seeing this in the paper, I want to keep doing it."

Reprinted in part from an article by Stephanie MacLellan in *The Chronical-Journal*. Betty Cotton is a member of the Vickers Heights WI.



Betty Cotton
Vickers Heights WI

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