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'Mother Fowler' going strong at 106

TED BROWN
Staff Writer

Maud Fowler might have celebrated her 106th birthday at the Bennett Health Centre recently, but she only opted to relinquish some independence two years ago.

"She's been one tough woman," said daughter Marian Fowler, herself a young 81. "And I suspect that's what has kept her going all these years."

Born in England April 21, 1902, Maud Martha Hughes' mother died when she was only three months old. Her father, George Hughes later remarried and Maud's stepmother cared for her at that time. But when Maud was still quite young, her father died, and her stepmother decided she couldn't care for her anymore. She placed Maud into the care of the Bernardo Home for Children in England.

"Mom was shipped to Canada in 1911," said Marian. "She always spoke about landing in Halifax, as it was winter and they couldn't make it to Quebec. She said she was on the ship the 'Corinth' for three weeks, and arrived in March."

At the ripe old age of 8, Maud arrived to Canada and was taken to Peterborough, where she was farmed out to various places, to work, sometimes on farms or at big family homes, and go to school.

"Mom was never very proud of being called a 'home child,'" said Marian. "She said the other children at school would make comments about 'the home child' and she was always feeling like a second-class citizen because of them."

Maud became a very caring person with little children, and at a young age, she began her life-

long calling looking after children, many times in private homes.

"At 21 years of age, Mom was babysitting the children of the future president of Esso," said Marian. "She was in Petrolia at the time, and later moved to Toronto, where she eventually met Dad."

Maud and Ival Lionel Fowler were married in 1925, and Marian was born in 1927. The family made their home in Toronto for several years.

"Dad had health problems, and he died at a young age," said Marian, "so Mom and I lived together. She was babysitting all the kids in the apartment building we lived in."

After Marian retired, they decided to move to Georgetown, as Marian had friends living here, and had visited the town several times.

"I asked Mom if she'd move to Georgetown, and she said 'sure,' so we moved here 13 years ago. We've never looked back— we both love Georgetown."

As Maud crossed her 100-year milestone, she experienced a few setbacks, including a broken hip, and cataracts. She has breezed through the surgery in both, and still enjoys a great life. She moved into the Bennett Centre in November of 2006.

"Even at the Bennett Centre, Mom has had major surgery, and she's still bouncing back," said Marian. "When she gets sick, I've asked her if she's worried about dying, and she always says 'No, I'm not going to die, I'm going to get better.' And she does!"

"She has been a wonderful mother, not only to me, but to lots of other children over the years, and she still receives cards and letters from those children she looked after— they still remember her every year, and all call her 'Mother Fowler'."

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