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Mother and daughter enjoy Centre

This week to help celebrate Seniors Month I am telling the story of a mother and daughter who enjoy living in Acton, but came originally from England to make their homes here – Gwen Pemberton and Stephanie Westaway.

Gwen was born in Northampton, England, and as a child remembers attending Beckett and Sergeant School. Some of her early memories are of the air raids and the sirens wailing. They would have to go to the basement of a fish and meat market until the all-clear sounded. The scariest moments of all were when the Doodle Bugs stopped their

roaring, because that meant the engine had cut off, and they were about to fall. They were forerunners of the missiles and rockets of today. Quite a few bombs landed in her town, and she remembers a plane coming down at the top of her street, and the German pilot being killed.

When her mother remarried she lived with her aunt in the same town for a couple of years, but in 1942 moved to London to live with her mother. She remembers a school closeby was bombed during the day in London and all the children were killed. Her first job at 14 years old

June is Seniors' Month



Stephanie and Gwen enjoy a little flutter, and are seen here on their trip to Vegas.

was to make army boots for the forces. When she met her future husband he was still in the army and he spent some time in Burma during the war.

When the war was over and he was demobbed (like all others being demobbed) he received a new suit, hat and shoes, plus a small amount of money, so he had something smart to wear while looking for a job.

The company her husband originally worked for, the famous Silver Cross baby carriages, had been completely demolished by the bombing, so he had to find another job. He started working in construction, (there was certainly lots to be rebuilt after the war) and he continued working for the same company for 27 years.

Stephanie was born in 1945, followed by a son, Terry, in 1947. As the children got older Gwen started to work and was employed by the Lyons Corner House (tea shop) in London.

In 1951 they moved to Harold Hill in Romford, Essex, where Gwen started working for a factory that manufactured underwear for Marks and Spencers. Queen Elizabeth, apparently, likes Marks and Spencers' underwear, so who knows maybe Gwen whipped up some undies that kept the young Princess warm and fashionable.

Stephanie remembers one job her mother had, working in a button factory. Any rejects were brought home. She remembers playing for hours with the buttons.

Gwen later worked for a television company in the days when TVs had coils and valves. She wound the coils. Son Terry and daughter Stephanie immigrated to Canada in 1974, and after visiting them here they decided to make the big move and apply to become immigrants also. They moved here in 1977, and lived with Stephanie and her family. Bill passed away in 1998.

Gwen enjoys the social side of the Centre especially the dinners, trips, bingo and Rama. She is often seen selling draw tickets at special

events.

Her husband Steven (better known as Bill) was well known around town as he worked for social services, and enjoyed chatting to people. He always walked around singing.

Stephanie was born in 1945 and started school at 5 years old in London. When they moved to Essex she had to catch the school bus to Romford, until the new schools were build in Harold Hill. She remembers it was called Mead infants and junior school; She later attended Harrowfield Secondary School. Her first job was with the G.P.O. (post office) where she was trained as a telephonist. She really enjoyed that, but didn't enjoy the shift work. When a friend told her Barclay Bank was looking for a telephonist she applied and got the job at double the salary, but ended up working in the clearinghouse for the bank. She had to catch the train into Liverpool St underground, and then transfer to the bank underground stop.

Stephanie tells me the bank was next door to the lord mayor of London's residence and across from the Bank of England. She worked there for 11 years. She met her future husband, Derek, an apprentice sheet metal worker, when they were 18 years old, and got engaged when she was 20. The day they should have been officially engaged she spent in hospital. She had been fiddling with knobs on the television and the lines moving on the screen caused her to black out. Doctors told her she should not touch the television knobs again and of course she did until it happened several

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A very young Stephanie with her mother Gwen taken in London when she was four months old.

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