

In Memoriam: Bertha Groot

July 25, 1931 - September 3, 2021



Bertha served for many years as a volunteer for the English Language Learners' (ELL) class at the Clareview Library. She was a quiet presence and had a happy twinkle in her eye whenever she humbly shared in the class. Bertha



looked healthy when she attended the volunteer appreciation lunch at my home mid-July, so it was a huge shock to us when we heard that she had died in early September. She had just turned 90, but you never would have thought that was her age.

Bertha's strength was in working one-on-one in group time with students who needed extra attention. Sometimes she would just decide to take the students to the public area in the library and find a suitable book to read with them.

Bertha, too, was an immigrant, and so could relate easily to our ELL students. Her family moved from The Netherlands to Alberta in 1949. She was the oldest of seven children, the only girl, with six brothers. She didn't have the opportunity to get a university education and had to work to make money to support the family. She worked as a maid, and – as her brother Bill stated at her funeral – “in

a place where she was treated like a maid. Not nice.”



Like many of the ELL students, Bertha's first language was also not English. Our ELL classes were held in the library. How interesting that Bertha's life was influenced by a librarian. Bill writes, “What

saved her was the fact that a lady for whom she had done some ironing and sewing, took an interest in her, took her to the library, got her a library card, and introduced her to the librarian who then helped her often with books that she was able to handle and from which she could learn.”



Some of the jobs Bertha held were cleaning and making beds, washing dishes, making wieners at a packing plant, and working in a bank. I wish now that I had given her more opportunities to share stories of those job experiences.



Bertha had many wonderful qualities. She was a great knitter and brought samples of her wonderful handiwork to



our classes. Several of her grandchildren shared stories at her funeral – all wearing toques knitted by their grandmother, Bertha. Bertha was an organist for her church and had a strong faith in God.



She delighted in participating in all the games we did in the class, a delight you can see in her eyes when she wore different hats in our musical chairs games or tried to pop a balloon while sitting on a chair.



After being married for 66 years to Bertha, we know her husband, Bill, will deeply miss her, as we all will. We were graced with her gifts and are thankful for her generosity in sharing them with us. We wish her family all the best as they adjust to life without her.

