

## News Release

### For Immediate Release. 20 March 2008

#### Writing memoirs “a great adventure” says 85-year-old author

As an 85-year-old resident of a New Edinburgh retirement home with no family, what do you do to stay active? For long-time resident of New Edinburgh Joyce Bryant, CM, BEM, the answer was simple. She wrote and published her memoirs, *Slender Threads*. And not only is she happy with the finished product -- a 190-page book bursting with anecdotes as well as photos and other memorabilia -- but the experience itself was enriching. So enriching that she says, “even if I never published *Slender Threads*, the rewards that I have reaped from the ‘process’ of writing it are priceless.”

“Looking back and reflecting on the ‘light and shadows’ of my life has allowed me to find new meaning and rediscover long forgotten joys. Early on in the project, I read through many of my old diaries written during the early years of my marriage.” (Joyce married late in life to a man 20 years her senior.) “I had forgotten how happy we were before the ravages of Alzheimer’s made the last few years of my husband’s life very painful. But I’ve been able to relive those happy times.”

But still, why go to all the trouble – and the expense -- especially when, like Joyce, you have no family to pass on your life story to? “It’s quite simple, really,” she explains. “I just wanted there to be a record of my life – a legacy. If not for my family, then for the many dear friends that I have been blessed with.”

As it turns out, Joyce’s story makes interesting reading for friends and strangers alike. Born to an English immigrant family in Winnipeg in the early 1920s, Joyce’s childhood was shaped by the Depression and premature death of her father. After overseas wartime service in the RCAF – Women’s Division, for which she was awarded the British Empire Medal, she ended up working for 14 years as the private secretary to the Right Honourable Vincent Massey, the first Canadian-born Governor-General. Another 14 years followed at the secretariat of the Order of Canada, during which time she was chosen to become a Member of the Order “for her dedication throughout her service at Government House during the tenure of five Governors General.”

All in all, it’s a remarkable yet ordinary life, especially given that she writes with as much enthusiasm about her friends and faith as her experiences with notable personages. And it’s clear that the story is far from over. Joyce loves living in a retirement home and the chapter she devotes to explaining why could be an excellent marketing tool. “It gives me the opportunity to remain much more engaged in the larger community,” she writes. “I don’t have to worry about the care and maintenance of a home. If I want to go somewhere, I just lock my door and go. I have all the

benefits of a small, well-run hotel that retains the atmosphere of a home. I wouldn't trade it for anything."

Joyce acknowledges that initially the idea of trying to organize her life story into a readable narrative was daunting, especially as she is not computer literate and can no longer type due to arthritis. "It was something that I had been thinking about for several years," she says, "but I had no idea how to go about it. Then by chance I read a privately published memoir and realised that with the help of a personal historian – an editor that specializes in such projects -- I could do it."

As the project progressed, so did the scope. "At first I just wanted to print a few books for close friends," Joyce recalls. "By the time we had to decide, however, word had got out and the interest was so great that we printed 300 copies. But within three weeks of the launch, those were sold out. We're now well into our second printing."

The response has been overwhelmingly positive and rewarding for Joyce. "My friends say that reading the book is just like having a cozy chat with me and of course, that was my intent. But what I didn't expect was that people who I have never met would read and enjoy it. I've met so many wonderful people. My only problem is, they all want to know what my next project is."

*Slender Threads*, a delightful tale about a fascinating life, is available at *Books on Beechwood*, (35 Beechwood Ave., Ottawa. Tel. 613.742.5030. [www.booksonbeechwood.ca](http://www.booksonbeechwood.ca)).

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Mrs. Bryant is available by appointment for interviews.

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