

Nonagenarian working on book

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A lifetime of enriching memories

By JODIE LOMBARDI

Dr. Estelle Cuffe Hawley has stored 90 years of memories in her lifetime, most of which will go down in history.

With failing eyesight, but in good health, Cuffe Hawley, a four-year Mississauga resident, is busy completing a volume of memoirs she had been working on for the past few years.

After submitting her application for a research grant under a program at the Ontario Heritage Foundation, Cuffe Hawley received approximately \$2,000 to publish a book that will not only contribute on several levels to Ontario's heritage, but will also provide insights into the impact of industrial changes from the turn of the century through the two world wars.

Cuffe Hawley says she hopes her book will show that "we are the product of our own environment, particularly our home environment."

She is reluctant to reveal parts of her life that might "give away too much" before the book is released, and pauses occasionally to decide what is "suitable" for advance publication. Still, the stories flow.

BEAUTIFUL PLACE

Cuffe Hawley speaks fondly of her life as a child growing up in the town of Peterborough — "a beautiful place to live."

Both parents belonged to pioneer families of the Rice Lake District. Cuffe Hawley was the middle child in the close-knit family of seven and describes her home life as "very happy, though very deprived."

She recalls the informal sing-alongs every night as the gang gathered around the piano — the centre of attraction in the small living room.

These family get-togethers became a large part of Cuffe Hawley's life that she



DR. ESTELLE CUFFE HAWLEY

remembers with affection.

"I never heard a sweeter voice than my father's," she says tenderly.

"We always sang a lot. Mom taught us to dance, maybe to make us graceful," Cuffe Hawley says.

BROTHER KILLED

The only time Cuffe Hawley's home lacked music was in 1916 after her brother was killed in France during World War I.

"The blinds were drawn, the piano was closed for two months and the old clock was stopped," Cuffe Hawley says. "But, I

remember the first day the piano was opened. Normalcy had come back after my brother's death."

Overcome by emotion while writing that part of her book, Cuffe Hawley says she cried and "had to put it down for a while. His death was so fruitless."

Cuffe Hawley prefers to look back on the happy times in her life, including the "day I married Hubert Hawley" in 1953 at the age of 59.

"He was a doll," she says of her late husband.

The pair had met for the first time in 1924, but it wasn't until 25 years later when Hubert returned from Vancouver that they discovered "we were for each other" and got married in Toronto.

"We loved dancing to the big bands on the radio. Fred Astaire was no better than Hubert was," Cuffe Hawley says matter-of-factly.

"It was a pretty good marriage," she says of their 30-year union.

POLITICAL LIFE

Another great love of her life was politics, probably stemming from the fact that "our home was always full of political discussions."

With 16 years of teaching behind her, six of which were spent as principal of St. Paul's Ward School in St. Catharines, Cuffe Hawley made her way into the political spotlight first as a trustee on the St. Catharines Board of Education, then as the first woman elected to the St. Catharines city council in 1938.

Throughout her career, she was a sought-after speaker at varied engagements lecturing on world peace, world hunger, citizenship, women's rights, education and the history of St. Catharines.

One of her biggest political disappoint-

ments was her crushing defeat in the St. Catharines mayoralty campaign on January 1, 1944. She described herself as a "victim of a national campaign to discredit progressive thinkers in post-war Canada."

GREAT REMEDIES

"If I had my life to live over, I would read more and play bridge and golf less," she muses.

Cuffe Hawley's book will contain other numerous tasty morsels, but she says she will leave those for when the book is published.

"I'm getting there," she confides.

Pen Day on

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Photo: Dr. Estelle Cuffe