

Feminist in the United Nations

In name of world peace dignity for individuals

"Learning to live by one's wits is one of the by-products of being born poor, black, or female."

Do these sound like the words of a wild-eyed, bra-burning feminist? Well, possibly, but they're a very small part in a chapter of a book Helen Tucker, of Mississauga, is contributing to about the women's movement that is soon to be published.

Mrs. Tucker is hardly wild-eyed, possibly a bra-burner (but that's highly doubtful), yet definitely a witty feminist.

She was the founding president of the Voice of Women, in 1960, the group which initiated the United Nations International year.

She has been a member of the United Nations Association since 1959.

She's done more travelling in the name of world peace and fellowship than Santa Claus in the amount of time she's been at it.

The old gent only makes his trip once a year, and Mrs. Tucker has yet to stop.

travels

Her travels have taken her to Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Ceylon, East Africa and Moscow, to give a partial list.

Her scrap books are full of invitations to dinner from the Mayor of Colombo, the Minister of External Affairs in New Delhi, and newspaper pictures of her with foreign dignitaries in Haderabad, Celon, and Japan, again to name only a few.

Her sense of community involvement and duty have seen her contributing to the Home and School Association, the YM and YWCA, the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, the United Church, the United Nations Association, the Institution on Public Affairs, the Canadian Institute for International Affairs, and the World Federalists.

You'd think with all her time spent in the air travelling to other countries, she wouldn't be all that familiar with Mississauga. But that's hardly the case.

Since Mr. and Mrs. Tucker moved to "Port Credit" as she still refers to it, in 1941, she's become one of the leading experts on local history, and admits that it would be wise for her to one day collect all her artifacts together, knowing they will be valuable.

history

For the 150th anniversary of the old Mississauga United Church, in the Mississauga Golf Club area, she prepared a history of the church since 1834 stressing, even at that time, they way the Indian and the white man co-operated to build a community together.

"Somehow the story always seems to come full circle back to co-operation and community living", says Mrs. Tucker.

History trivia? Not quite. Mrs. Tucker can explain how many of the areas got their name as a direct result of her research in 1950 into the history of the church.

"Slavebank Road" took its name from the staves — floated down the river to make barrels for the "new" church in 1834," she points out.

Yet her sense of community is far different than most people's.

She sees community structures, as we know them, being rejected all the way down the line.

She sees the traditional institutions changing and uses the family unit as a microcosm of her observations.

"I can observe that our society is moving from a structured base to one that is non-structured," she says.

family unit

"It's a part of our changing society that can be recognized," she claims, "right on down to the family unit."

"We're renouncing the dictatorial rights of the few against the right of the many," she explains.

"For instance, how can we program our resources? How can we renounce nationalism? We just have to participate in world government," she says.

She claims that individuals have the right to be free members of our society and that our society must reorganise itself into a world community.

"A person in society needs to be free to create and be free to co-operate rather than operate destructively," she says.

"I'm particularly concerned with the need for people to take responsibility for the changing of social patterns. They have to participate," she urges.

"We've had war. We've had cold war. There's been military control all over the world," she says, pointing out South America as an example.

"The pursuer of power has to maintain it by power and the most significant example of that is the psychology of nuclear weapons," she says.

"It's in the minds of men that war is created and it's from there the concept of peace must come."

subcultures

"The subcultures of today are examining alternatives to the traditional religions with their drug experimentations," she says.

"But they need to discover whether it's in the drug or the mind where creativity is discovered."

Helen Tucker is experimenting, too, but hardly with drugs.

Currently she is in the midst of setting up an experiment in international living for 30 youths from

Canada, Yugoslavia, the United States, India and Guyana.

"Hopefully it will be like swallowing a pill and then not having any further prejudices," she says.

The purpose of the experiment is to create a peaceful world community by accepting new cultures and respecting the dignity of the individual. The program has been developed with the assistance of the Canadian Peace Research Institute.

"Hopefully they will be 30 young people who will be world minded; futurist leaders capable of creating their own society on an island near Kingston, Ontario.

SEMINAR

Mrs. Tucker has just returned herself from a United Nations Youth seminar in New York where she shared U.N. briefings by day and sleeping bag accommodations on the floor of the community church by night.

"I came to know international people when I was going to school in the United States," she explained.

Both she and her husband of 41 years Bill, were born in America, and moved to Canada when her husband, a furniture designer, was commissioned to furnish the Royal Suite of a Vancouver hotel for the visit of the Queen (now the Queen Mother) and her husband, King George VI, in 1939.

Both are now Canadian citizens and stopped considering themselves as Americans years ago.

"I had a prof at the University of Michigan who was and an exchange teacher from the Phillipines," she explained.

She used to babysit his two children.

When she got a scholarship to study in France, her international perspective opened considerably.

"My work ethic didn't correspond with that of the competitive and adversary system," she explains.

Her first travel mission was to Mexico in 1957. Prior to that she had been chaperone to Miss Canada at the coronation of the Queen in 1953. In 1958 she was the leader of the East-West cultural mission to Japan in 1958.

One would think in her spare time she would relax and enjoy the lazy garden outside her studio window, but that's just not the case.

One night a week she lectures speech in communications to graduate students at the University of Toronto.

"We need to get people involved," she says.

"I'd like to get participants from the different ethnic groups for the experiment in international living from right here in Mississauga," she says.

"We need an Italian and a Portuguese with a knowledge of third world activities," she said.

You couldn't convince her to sit down and rest.

In the space of two hours her phone rang no less than five times on assorted community business. That's the trouble with having your base of operations at home



Helen Tucker does more traveling in the name of world peace and fellowship than Santa Claus. She was just elected the Unitarian Universalists Association representative to the United Nations.