

'World Citizen 20727'

Local peace activist Helen Tucker marks 90th birthday with friends

By IRENE GENTLE
Special

Thirty-years ago, peace activist, "World Citizen" and Port Credit resident Helen Tucker celebrated her 60th birthday by leaping from a tree into a foot of water and breaking her ankle.

Her recent 90th birthday celebration was a more sedate affair as three dozen friends and admirers milled around a pretty Stavebank Rd. home to honor the work of the still-active, still idealistic Tucker.

"Actually this celebration is a little early. I didn't expect to be here until your 100th birthday because what is 90 years to someone like Helen," asked friend Arthur Green of the woman who helped to found the disarmament group Voice of Women. "I'd like to share some personal anecdotes about Helen, like the time when Helen was headed off to some exotic place, Bangladesh or something, and there were a lot of hijackings going on at the time. So I asked her husband Bill if he was worried about all those plane flights for Helen and his response was immediate. He said 'With Helen aboard, they wouldn't dare.'"

He has a point. After all, the Texas-born, Oklahoma and Michigan raised, number 20727 on the World Citizen Registry, Tucker has never been one to back away from a good fight. As long, of course, as the fight is for peace.

Common sense

"I've learned many things from Helen and one of the first things I learned is that big words can mean some pretty simple work," says Mary Noble of the amazingly youthful-looking Tucker. "I was active with Voice of Women too and there was a time when Helen told me to come to her house and collate. I thought 'Oh, collate, that must be saving the world for sure.' But what it actually meant was stacking papers."

The anecdote is illustrative of the common sense approach that Tucker takes to such lofty goals and world-wide world citizenship.

"I wanted Esperanto as the world language. That's what we ought to have in Canada now, is French, English and Esperanto," says Tucker.

The purpose of the language is to help unite world peoples through their common goals and purposes rather than through politics.

"The United Nations has the blockage of politics and that's unfortunate," says Tucker. "We

have to find more goodwill as essential to our survival. In terms of youth, I think they'd do better to be able to find gratification through other people. To find their animus, to find their soul. To find what really makes them tick."

When this happens, Tucker feels we'll be that much closer to achieving her life-long dream of international harmony.

"The planet isn't different coun-

tries, it's a congregation of people," explains Tucker. "And congregation means coming together. We've got to appreciate ourselves as people and not as heroes who require a gun."

earth people, we are citizens. I was born, therefore I belong. I am a citizen of the world," explains Tucker of the philosophy she is to repeat frequently as name-tagged guests mill about, occasionally stopping to buss her cheek and offer congratulations. "There ain't going to be any war anymore. We have to believe that because we're all citizens of the world and we have to be responsible."

For the former University of Toronto lecturer Tucker, campaigning on behalf of the world involves such tasks as taking groups of youths to foreign places as well as championing the cause of Esperanto, a mix of languages, as the only fitting "world language."



Photo by Peter Thompson
Helen Tucker pores over some old photographs during a party to celebrate the local peace activist's 90th birthday on Saturday.