

REMEMBERING MRS. AMY FERGUSON

I am pleased to know that as part of the 100th celebration of Trinity-St. Paul's United Church in Nelson you are recognizing the wonderful contribution of Amy Ferguson during her forty years of music making. So many of us are forever indebted to her for giving us the gifts of song and music. From 1932 to 1972 she was an amazing lady on a mission to bring the beauty of great music into the lives of young people in Nelson. And this she could only do with special musical gifts of her own, a strong will, determination, patience, a glowing faith and perseverance through adversity.

When I think of A.F. many memories of my St. Paul's Boys Choir days come flooding back. Let me share a few.

- Struggling through heavy snow in the winter to that regular 9AM Saturday choir practice at the church.
- Upon arrival in the cold church some of us were sent to the furnace room to bring up a load of kindling and wood to start the wood heater going in the practice room.
- Then it was immediately on to vocal warm ups and rehearsing the hymns and anthems for our next monthly appearance in church.
- Getting forty energetic, restless young boys to focus on serious music took very special teaching skills and enormous patience. But when we could all start to hit those high notes in tune there was a special magic in the air and a pride in our achievements.

And at rehearsals there were always a few boys who had to leave early to catch their 10 AM hockey practice. One of A.F.'s

axioms was that "you catch young people on the fly and you always will meet them halfway."

We left those rehearsals with a new song in our hearts. Great songs that live with us to this day -- "Jerusalem," "Sheep May Safely Graze", "The Holy City", "Come Unto Him," "O for the Wings of a Dove". I am reminded this was in the heart of the Great Depression and many of us came from homes where money was very scarce. All A.F. asked for was our loyalty to the music and the choir.

"Nothing motivates like performance" and I well remember A. F. getting us lined up in the vestibule, giving last minute reminders and warnings, fixing those starched Eton collars and checking navy blue suits. Then after a prayer from the pastor we walked down the catwalk beside the rows of organ pipes -- opened the twin doors and took our place in the ^{choir} pews facing a full church of proud parents and friends. Mrs. F. came in -- took her place facing us at the organ and for the next hour we were singing angels (sort of). The power and fullness of that great old pipe organ ^{lit}ed us in song. We didn't know it at the time how extremely fortunate we were and what a rich everlasting experience this was.

And then there was our final year end concert in June to a packed audience -- sacred, secular, solos, fun songs, guest soloists, and yes, a dramatic recitation from Mr. Ferguson -- who could forget "When Ruby (Rubenstein) Came to Play": Our last selection at these concerts was always the ever beautiful "Now the Day is Over" which ends with the lines:

"When the morning wakens then may I arise

Pure and fresh and sinless in Thy holy eyes."

These words remind me of A.F.

"Life is a song that I must sing

A gift that I must share

And when I see what joy it brings

My heart soars."

Thank you for making our hearts soar in song Mrs. F. We are
forever grateful and your legacy lives on.

Ray Thompson
St Paul's U.C. Choir-1935-52