

## Biography of Evelyn Miller: by Katie Wiens

Throughout Evelyn's whole life, she has always been helping others and living life to the fullest. She always fulfilled her dreams despite what others said, and she was always helping the less fortunate. Evelyn never let others stop her from completing her education and becoming a teacher, and she always did what she could to help those who were not as fortunate as her.

Evelyn Miller was born on May 15, 1929 in Pontiac, Michigan, and is 86 years old as of 2015. Her mother's name was Gladys Miller who was born on March 22 in 1902 and her father was Alex Miller who was born on October 17, 1902. Evelyn has only one sister named Lyllian who is about a year older and was born in 1927. Evelyn's mother, Gladys, had very poor health. Despite this, she was always very good to Evelyn and her sister Lyllian, and she was a very kind and wonderful woman. Lyllian, Evelyn, and their mother often went to church on Sunday together, and they were very close as a family. However, Evelyn's father was never very involved in Evelyn and Lyllian's childhood. While growing up, Evelyn never knew much about her father and rarely saw him since he stayed in Michigan when she moved to London, Ontario. She only ever got to know him during her high school years.

When Evelyn was one and a half years old, her mother moved to London, Ontario with her and Lyllian because they were in the Great Depression. Evelyn's mother was very ill during this time and her father was working on a railroad in Michigan to get money. Her grandparents in London thought they could give a better life to Evelyn and Lyllian, so they suggested that Evelyn, her sister, and her mother move to London. They offered security and a good life. Her grandparents owned a successful bakery in London on Mill Street. Evelyn's grandfather's name was Dean. He was a baker and the owner of *Dean's Bakery* in London. This bakery is still around today, though it is now called *Lewis' Bakery*. Dean was a very quiet man, and he had a heart condition so he was never very athletic. He was incredibly kind and cared deeply for Evelyn and her sister. Her grandmother's name was Sophie. She enjoyed flowers and had a whole garden filled with pansies. She loved birds and had two canaries which was why Evelyn could never own any other pets while growing up. Evelyn's grandmother sewed and made dresses and pyjamas for both Evelyn and Lyllian. She was very good at sewing and was always very involved in the church. She was a very wonderful woman. Evelyn's home in London was very comfortable, and faced the Thames River. She shared a room with her sister, Lyllian. Her mother and her grandparents were all very good examples to Evelyn and they raised her in a way that showed her to help those in need. The kindness and love Evelyn's family showed her and her sister was no doubt a factor that led to the kindness that Evelyn showed in her adult years.

The biggest role model in Evelyn's life was her grandfather. Evelyn looked up to her grandfather very much, and he loved her a great deal. Whenever Lyllian was at school he would take her to the marketplace in London. He would buy her ice creams and once bought her a little shaving kit. Evelyn was his favourite grandchild, and they were the best of friends while she grew up. They were incredibly close, and he was a big influence in her life.

Evelyn was very athletic as a child, which was carried through into her adult years. She did a lot of track and field when she was younger and was involved in a lot of sports, but she never participated in soccer. Also, Lyllian and Evelyn were very close as children. They would often go figure skating and would do church activities together. Evelyn was in the orchestra as a child, and would play music in the church. Along with the orchestra, she was also involved in youth groups at her church as well, and she walked to church every Sunday. She went to the United Church in London with her family. Evelyn also did CGIT (Canadian Girls in Training) youth groups which was for ages 12-18 and she was in the Explorers. She was a student who went through these camps, and she enjoyed them very much. She was always involved in the community when she was younger, and even as an adult she is still involved in her church and the community around her.

A memorable world event that Evelyn remembers happening while growing up is the Great Depression. Evelyn was too young to remember much about the Great Depression, but her family had no financial troubles during that time as her grandparents were very well off and the bakery provided for them. While in the Depression, Evelyn remembers learning about the quintuplets, and how she was astounded by them, since quintuplets were basically unheard of during that time period.

Evelyn also remembers the end of WW2, which happened when she was around fifteen years old. There was a huge celebration in London that her grandparents took her to. There was dancing on the main street, and it was a very exciting time. However, she was too young to remember many of the details, and she didn't know much about what was going on during the war. During WW2, Evelyn remembers having food stamps and rations. They never had a problem with food, but many others did. They were always very comfortable and incredibly lucky. During WW2, she always had food like breads and cakes. Many people would come to Evelyn's grandparent's bakery and their home to ask for money or food. Evelyn's grandmother would give these people sandwiches and other types of food even though they just wanted money most of the time. Most of these people were very appreciative of what Evelyn's grandmother did for them, and some women even prayed and gave thanks because her grandmother showed such kindness. Sometimes, however, people would throw away the food they were given because they actually just wanted money to buy liquor. Evelyn's grandmother eventually started sending people to the Salvation Army, because if they really wanted food they would be able to get a meal there. Since she did this, she got a bill from the Salvation Army at the end of every month. Evelyn is very much like her grandmother in this way, and seeing her grandmother helping others was perhaps one of the events in her life that lead her to always helping the less fortunate.

Another world event Evelyn remembers is the flood of London. She remembers her grandfather watching out of the kitchen window as the water flooded up the breakwall across the Thames River one step at a time. The water rose up over the breakwall overnight and kids were being sent home from school. However, the water had risen up so high that they couldn't get

home. They climbed trees to get away from the water and they had to be saved. She remembers kids screaming and crying because they couldn't get home. Her grandparent's house was protected from the water since it was built to withstand floods. She was only ten at the time this happened, but she remembers it well. Even though she was young while all of these events were going on, Evelyn still remembers the impact they had on the world around her.

While growing up, Evelyn always wanted to become a teacher or a missionary. She grew up in very good times, because if you wanted to be something and worked hard you could become whatever you wanted. She never let the fact that it was odd for girls to continue their schooling get in the way of becoming a teacher. The elementary school Evelyn went to as a child was Talbot Street Public School in London. She got along with her teachers and classmates very well. She loved everything about school, however when Evelyn was in grade 7, there was a teacher that would throw chalk at you if he thought you weren't listening. The teachers at her school inspired her to want to become a teacher as an adult. The high school that Evelyn went to was Central Collegiate in London. She got along very well with all of her teachers and she was involved in a lot of sports like track and field. When Evelyn went to grade 13, her aunts didn't approve of it, since they thought she shouldn't continue with her education. It was odd for females to pursue education while Evelyn was growing up, but she did it regardless of this fact. Her aunts tried to tell her what to do, and didn't want her to go to grade 13 or university. It wasn't a problem financially, but they thought it was strange for a girl to get a proper education. Even though her aunts thought this, Evelyn continued on to university anyways. She pursued her dreams despite what her family members said.

While Evelyn was a teenager, saddle shoes were very popular, as were wide skirts for the girls and fur coats. Evelyn owned a muskrat coat while she was a teenager. Stamp collecting was also very popular during this time. Evelyn's husband had a huge collection of stamps and Evelyn still owns it.

During their high school years, Evelyn and Lillian started going to Florida every year for their father's birthday and started getting to know him. They went every year during the fall, since his birthday was in October. Even after high school, they continued making the trip to Florida until 2012, when their dad passed away.

Evelyn's first job was picking raspberries for 12 cents a box when she was fourteen. She hopped on a truck to get a ride to the orchard to pick raspberries. It wasn't a very glamorous job, but Evelyn enjoyed it nonetheless. Evelyn always enjoyed even the most tedious job, since it meant that she was being involved in the community.

Gladys Miller, Evelyn's mother, passed away when Evelyn was sixteen years old. Lillian was around eighteen years old when their mother died in June of that year, and they were left alone. They were stable financially, but their grandparents both passed away as well, so Evelyn's aunts took care of her and Lillian and watched out for them.

The university that Evelyn attended was Western in London, Ontario. She took Health and Physical Education, and Recreation (also known as Health Sciences). She graduated from Western in 1951. Out of her high school class of forty, only two students went on to college or university, and both of them were females. Evelyn was very lucky, and jobs during this time were very plentiful so she got her first teaching job very soon after her graduating from university. She was incredibly happy to have the chance to do what she loved, and she thoroughly enjoyed being a teacher.

The first teaching job Evelyn ever had was at Kingston. She started teaching there in the fall of 1951, where she taught Health and Physical Education for two years. It was a very wonderful experience. She started a basketball team, and kids walked three to four miles for practice. She was incredibly happy with her chance to be a teacher, and she loved being able to educate younger people. During this time, Evelyn was also involved in a lot of camps as a program director. These were diabetic camps, and people came from all over to participate. The pay wasn't great, but Evelyn had a wonderful time nonetheless. When she started teaching, she hired students to do the camps as well. Overall, she enjoyed her time at the camps quite a bit. Even in her adult years, Evelyn was always helping others in her community, as shown from her time at the diabetic camps and the time she spent teaching at Kingston.

After teaching at Kingston for two years, Evelyn moved to Petrolia, which is near Sarnia. She taught there for one year, and then she started teaching at Petrolia High School. This is where she met her husband, Charles Miller. They met in 1953 and married in 1954. When the two of them decided to get married, she had to leave the school since the school board did not allow married couples to be on the staff together. She started supply teaching around that area, which was one of the only rotten teaching experiences Evelyn had. Charles stayed at Petrolia High School. Charles Miller was the principle at the high school in Petrolia where he and Evelyn met for two years. Evelyn and Charles were married for 61 years and they had four kids. The oldest, Jen, who is now 60, lives in London. She is now a professor at Western University. The second oldest is Nancy who is now 58, and was born in 1957. She now lives in Toronto and works as an artist. They adopted a boy named John, who is 51 now and works at Ford's. He lives in Leamington. Their youngest is Greg who is 49 and lives in Toronto. Evelyn and her husband owned several cats and a miniature collie named Rascal while they were married. Evelyn and Charles had a great marriage and they were deeply in love.

When they were married, Evelyn and Charles lived in a very nice apartment in Petrolia. Charles taught Agriculture and Chemistry, and he actually owned bees at the school he taught at. He was a graduate from a university in Guelph. Once they had kids, Evelyn started working as a supply teacher. She was a supply teacher that taught at Glencoe for two months, and during this time she and her husband still lived in Petrolia. At the end of the year, they moved to Glencoe because her husband got a job there. Evelyn also taught Physical Education at UMEI for 6 months since UMEI couldn't get a teacher, so she taught for one semester from December to June. After working at UMEI, Evelyn went back to University to teach primary school. She went to St. Clair College and got a certificate in Early Primary Education. She then taught primary

school in Windsor for three years, which was a very wonderful experience for her. She started teaching primary full time to pay for her daughters to go to college and university.

Charles retired in 1968. He wanted to supply teach but he broke his hip in four places and was in the hospital for a while, which was the end of supply teaching for him. Evelyn retired quite a few years after him in 1987. They travelled together to Ethiopia with their church in 1988. They also travelled all over Canada and the United States. They went to England, Scotland and Alaska which was very beautiful and different. Evelyn would love to go back to Alaska one day, since it was so wonderful. Their second daughter was in Newfoundland for a while, so they went to see her in St. John's. The town was a very close-knit community, and they all worked together. Charles and Evelyn went to the east coast often since they loved it so much. Evelyn always lived her life to the fullest, and she saw as much of the world as she could.

After Evelyn's husband, Charles, passed away in July of 2015, Evelyn started volunteering to keep herself busy. She volunteers at the Mennonite Home in Leamington now, and she feeds supper to a lady named Helen Janzen on the third floor every evening when she isn't playing cards. Evelyn also volunteers at the church a lot. She got very involved with her community and continued helping others even though she was mourning.

Evelyn doesn't see all of her kids very often. However, she does see Greg once a month. Evelyn sees John frequently since he lives so close, and she sees him a couple of times a week. Overall, they are all very good kids, and Evelyn loves them dearly. Evelyn is still very close with her sister, Lyllian. They talk at least twice a week for an hour at a time. Even though Evelyn's eye problem prevents her from driving to Chatham to meet Lyllian, they still meet frequently at weddings and on Lyllian's birthday. They have remained close as siblings throughout their entire lives.

Throughout Evelyn's life, she has always been helping those in need, and has been very involved with the community she lived in. She always lives life to the fullest and many could, and should, use her as an example to improve their lives and help those around them.