

Nora Eleanor Eckford (May 24, 1921 to June 23, 2010)

Our dear mother, the incomparable Nora Eckford passed away in her sleep on June 23 at the age of 89 in Langley, BC. We'll miss her very much but rather than focus on the loss, want to celebrate her loving nature and full and interesting life. She was a wonderful mother, a stalwart best friend and, as those who knew her well would say, a real character! Nora was a storyteller extraordinaire...not just an average teller of tales, but a highly skilled raconteur. Even up to the last days of her life she could amaze us with some highly amusing and richly textured tale. Yes, perhaps you had heard that one before... but it would be retold with a completely fresh perspective or coloring. And of course she wasn't above a tad bit of embellishment or enhancement here or there. Just to *massala* things up a bit. And over 25 years of living abroad had provided a well-stocked spice rack for her to work from.

My parents absolutely loved Pakistan and their many dear Pakistani friends. It was Mom who convinced us to go abroad in the first place. To her it was all a big adventure and definitely the high point of her life. Thanks to her, it became the high point of ours as well.

We first arrived in the NWFP in 1957 where my father (Ted) worked for the Canada Colombo Plan, Warsak Dam project on the Kabul River. We lived in the Canadian colony outside Peshawar. Our family fell in love with Pakistan right from the start and with Mom leading the way, enjoyed many exotic and off-the-beaten-track experiences. It was an era of easy socializing between expats and Pakistanis (especially military) and as a result we developed many lifelong local friends...some we consider "family" to this day.

In 1960, Dad joined Tipton and Kalmbach to work on the Indus Basin Irrigation Project in the Punjab and so we moved down to Lahore. We stayed in the T & K staff house on Fountain Road for a few weeks before moving way out to one of the brand new houses in Gulberg III-C (it was still mostly open fields back then!). Later in about '64 we moved closer in to 19-H Gulberg-I. Mom was one of a handful of expat women to stay on over the '65 Indo-Pak war and if there was ever any doubt before, it was then she cemented her reputation as Lahore's Hostess with the Mostess. The house was filled every night with hungry, thirsty, temporarily bachelor'd expats. She was a fabulous cook and she and Dad were well known for their elaborate parties – something I'm unabashedly proud of! They had a genuine *joie de vivre*. In fact, people still mention their very memorable (perhaps infamous in some circles) Hawaiian Luau...roasted pig, grass skirts and all! Polo matches and the band concerts at the Punjab Club were part of their routine.

I returned to Canada in 1968 but my parents remained in Lahore until 1972. Then after 4 years working in Papua New Guinea with Bechtel and 3 years in southern Iran with Harza Engineering, they returned again to Pakistan in 1979 when Dad became resident engineer for Harza at Tarbela Dam. Finally, in 1983 they retired to Salt Spring Island, British Columbia where Dad worked on his final construction project, their dream retirement home overlooking the sea. Sadly, not long after it was finished he passed away in 1986. Mom stayed on Salt Spring Island for several more years until moving to Langley, B.C. in 1990 to be closer to my sister Kathleen, brother Tim and her four grandchildren. She had a rich and comfortable retired life with her family close by but there is no denying that the years in Pakistan were the best of her life.

Mom had many wonderful traits including unbounded generosity and an ever-present twinkle in her eye. But to me, one of her most endearing qualities was a knack for focusing on the most positive qualities in a person. This inclination combined with her keen powers of observation, also the foundation of her storytelling, resulted in her having something flattering to say about just about anyone. Sure, it may have been gilding the lily a bit but I think it's a great way to look at the world. I just hope I can remember to practice it more...

Her most fortunate son, Pat