

Verla Jean Forsyth (nominating letter)

Verla Jean Forsyth was born on December 16, 1919, in Asquith, Saskatchewan. She attended Saskatoon Normal School and after one year of teaching at Demaine, Saskatchewan, she joined the Saskatoon Board of Education in 1943. For sixteen years, Verla Jean taught at Sutherland, Princess Alexandra and Queen Elizabeth Schools where she transmitted her love of music to children in the school and community. In 1959, she accepted the position of music consultant for the Public School Board. With the exception of two years which were taken out for study, Verla has been associated with our educational system for forty-one years.

During the forty-one years, her commitment and dedication to our system has been outstanding. She has molded and created one of the finest music programs in Canada, and many music specialists have substantiated this. Her innovative ways and research-based learning has brought the Kodály and Orff methods, ukuleles, recorders to schools. Verla Jean has inspired many students to follow a career in music education and also students to pursue a life-long love of music appreciation and recreation.

Verla Jean has put long hours of untiring effort into other aspects of education. She was an early member of the Saskatchewan Music Educators' Association and has served on its Provincial Executive. She has helped this organization grow from tiny beginnings to a membership of over 400 educators. Her reputation is such that other educators, both provincially and nationally, look to her for her expertise. Her gracious manner has been an asset to our system and our community as a whole.

In Saskatoon, Verla has been a volunteer member of the Saskatoon Music Festival Association and has provided leadership for its annual Christmas and Spring Music Festivals. Without her untiring administrative efforts, the joys of Christmas would have been lost to participants and audiences in the city of Saskatoon. Also, Verla has been instrumental in taking music out to our citizens throughout the city. This includes the Centennial Auditorium Noon-Hour Festival of Carols, performances at many of our malls, TV stations, radio stations, and senior citizens' residences. For sixteen years, she was the Choir Director and organist at Grosvenor Park United Church. In addition to these activities, she organized and directed the Saskatoon Girls' Choir for eleven years on a volunteer basis. "Her girls," as she calls them, can be found from coast to coast, and her influence is evident in their lives and careers.

Verla Jean has been an excellent role model and teacher to women in education. She has encouraged many teachers and administrators to develop personal and professional goals in order that they reach their full potential.

In June 1985, Verla Jean retired from her chosen career. But even in her retirement she continues to assist music programming in our city working as a member of the Saskatoon Music Festival Association and volunteering as the organizer for the annual Kinsmen Christmas Carol Festival.

We feel that she would be an excellent recipient for Honorary Life Membership.