



SEVEN OAKS  
EDUCATION FOUNDATION INC.

# Foundation

NEWS

Spring 2021

## REMEMBERING PAT BARBER

A legacy of love for literacy.



Pat Barber

Some people are born to be teachers. Patricia 'Pat' Barber was one of those people.

The eldest of seven children, Pat was the first person in her family to go to university, having graduated at age 19 from the University of Toronto – literally the day before she turned 20. Shortly after, she began her career in Schumacher near Timmins, Ontario, where she taught students not much younger than herself.

It was during a trip to England that her life would truly change. This is where she would meet her friend's brother, Gordon, a Canadian serving as an RAF officer. The two were engaged in ten days and married months later. Later on, was to teach secondary students - mostly 15 year-old leavers - in England.

England was also where Pat met former Seven Oaks School Division superintendent, Glenn Nichols in 1956.

"I first met Pat in 1956 in London," recalls Nichols. "I was teaching that year in London. My wife Neva and I were friends of Pat's sister-in-law, Lucille Barber, who was working in London. Pat came to visit her on her way to Aden, where Gordon was stationed in the Air Force. She had a 2 year-old, Josh, and a baby."

"What an amazing thing for her to start out all by herself, to sail in a troopship all the way to Aden! I admired her independence and almost pioneering spirit to undertake all that."

It wasn't until 1966 that Nichols would hear from Pat again, this time as she and Gordon were discussing a return to Canada. This was when Nichols was Division Superintendent, and Pat wanted to inquire about a job.

"I hired her sight unseen. I just thought she had to be a good teacher because she was so independent, and she was an exceptional teacher. She was also an independent kind of person."

### Welcome to West Kildonan

The Barber family returned to Canada in 1967, moving into a home on Southall Drive in Winnipeg. Pat began teaching English at West Kildonan Collegiate shortly after.

While her eldest, Josh, never had her for a teacher ("I tried to ignore my mother when I was in high school," he laughs), his sister Katherine was her student in Grade 10.

"I requested to be taught by her," says Katherine. She recalled how, although she uses her formal name in public, her family called her "Kate."

"The family joke was that I had to tell my mother to stop calling me 'Katherine' in class!"

Josh and Katherine both recall how much students appreciated their mother's teaching style.

"She knew her students' families, especially because they lived in West Kildonan, recalls Josh. "She met her students and she knew what their sisters and parents were doing."

In particular, Josh recalled how his mother instilled a love of reading in him, having taught him to read at an early age. That love of literature shone through in her professional life as well, inspiring and challenging her students.

Josh remembers how a boy who had never read a book before Pat's class once told her, 'I got amazed.'

"She cherished that comment."

Katherine remembers how, "she had students read a book a month and turned many reluctant students on to reading by individualizing their programs, finding books they would enjoy."

"She loved Shakespeare and inspired students– made them memorize soliloquies from Henry V. Former students would see her and ask her if she was still making students memorize from that play!"

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Pat introduced Canadian/Manitoban authors like Margaret Laurence and Gabrielle Roy to the students' reading lists in the 1970s. She taught literature, poetry, essay-writing and assigned book reports. She marked a lot of papers and reports at night, and she brought work home with her in other ways as well.

"We were a literary family. We recited Romeo and Juliet or Henry V around the dining room table. My father also had an interest in language and encouraged us to learn German and French," recalls Katherine.

## Retirement

Pat taught Grade 9, 10 and 11 English at West Kildonan Collegiate from 1967-1988. After her retirement, she looked after Gordon and travelled to see her children and their families' children, now spread across Canada and the U.S.

After Gordon's passing, Pat lived off Roslyn Road for several years before moving to Ottawa to be closer to family. That family now includes six grandchildren, one great-granddaughter and 32 nieces and nephews.

But in a very real way, her students could be counted among her family as well. Pat was the epitome of a lifelong teacher and would remember her students when she met them years later.

That is the type of teacher Pat Barber was. She shared her own love of language with her students, and that love lit the same flame in those around her.

## Addendum:

*It is with great sorrow that we acknowledge the passing of Katherine "Kate" Barber, who spoke so eloquently of her mother in this story. As with her mother, she too will be missed by her many family and friends.*

# PANDEMIC NO BARRIER TO GENEROSITY

We know: some of the 'fun' may feel like it's gone out of 'fundraising' since we can't enjoy the live, in-person entertainment that usually accompanies such activities.

But the need to support education isn't restricted by COVID. Neither is the support the Seven Oaks Education Foundation has received from our incredible community.

Thanks to the generosity of both our prize donors and our supporters, we raised over \$7,000 for scholarships through our most recent fundraising efforts. And – though we all win when we support education – a few people won a little extra!

Congratulations to:

- Our 50/50 winner, **Debra Rarog**
- Winner of a Lakeview Hecla Gold Stay and Play package, **Jey Williamson**
- Winner of \$1,000 of Canad Inns gift cards, **Nicole Lavallee**; and
- Winner of 400,000 Avion Points, **Judy Chan!**

Thank you to everyone who supported SOEF and we all look forward to when we can once again gather together and put the fun back into fundraising with the entertainment we all appreciate so much!



Debra Rarog



Jey Williamson



Nicole Lavallee

*Congratulations!*

**Seven Oaks Education Foundation** is an organization dedicated to providing the students of Seven Oaks School Division access to post-secondary education.

The Foundation raises funds to help students realize their post-secondary goals through scholarship opportunities and distributes these funds to facilitate learning for as many students as possible.

**Home Routes/Chemin Chez Nous** is a Winnipeg based non-profit organization initiated by Mitch Podolak and Ava Kobrinsky. Over the past two years, SOEF and Home Routes have partnered to fulfill both of our mandates. While patrons experience top level musicianship, we are creating opportunities for Seven Oaks School Division graduates to continue their academic paths.