

RWTO/OERO Niagara Falls Branch Newsletter September 2022: Celebrating June Thomas

Written by Linda Dueck, Treasurer and Membership Convenor



June was born in Toronto on February 11, 1932. The years of the Depression were difficult for many families, and June and her parents were no exception. June's very early years were spent moving throughout Ontario due to her father's job situation. When June was four years old, her father secured a job in Port Colborne, and it was here that June grew up, attended elementary school, and graduated from Port Colborne High School. June enrolled in Hamilton Normal School and graduated from there in 1954.

June began her teaching career at Port Weller School, which at that time was under the jurisdiction of Grantham Township. After two years, June married William Thomas and, like many teachers and young wives of that time, stayed home to raise their three daughters.

After ten years, June returned to the classroom and worked as a supply teacher for five years. This was followed by two years working as principals' relief and eventually turned into a permanent job which lasted for another 18 years.

Throughout her teaching career, June taught all grades in all subject areas in every elementary school in Niagara Falls, but her most fulfilling time was her last four years as a Kindergarten teacher. June enjoyed putting on plays with her classes, and a favourite memory is when the classroom and hallways were decorated for a production of *A Christmas Carol*. Visiting a local

retirement home and preparing Kindergarten graduation ceremonies were also highlights of her time in the classroom.

Following her retirement from Valley Way School in 1988, June and her husband were able to travel and enjoy time with their growing family. In addition to her three daughters and their spouses, June is ever so proud of her seven grandchildren and five great grandchildren. In 2018 June moved into Willoughby Retirement Home in Chippawa, where she continues an active life looking after the home's flowers, doing crafts, and taking part in the exercise programmes.

Reflecting on her time with the Niagara Falls Branch of RWTO/OERO, June has enjoyed making the name tags, the entertainment, and especially the fellowship of other retired educators. In 2015/2016 she was honoured with the Cora Bailey Award for her contributions to the branch.

In thinking about the teachers of today, June would encourage them to establish discipline right away, be firm but be fair, be a listener, respect your students and they will respect you, and most important of all enjoy your students.

RWTO/OERO's motto of "Caring and Sharing" is definitely reflected in June's daily life through her encompassing smile and positive attitude.