

34 YEARS  
OF SERVICE

# OAK BAY VOLUNTEER SERVICES



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## BEST OF THE SEASON TO ALL!

**D**uring this holiday season we have much to be grateful for at Oak Bay Volunteer Services. Our wonderful volunteers connect with so many people in the community and there is a lot of sharing!

We are fortunate to provide services all year round. Our volunteers are kept busy giving much needed drives with personal assistance

for medical, shopping, banking, errands and other activities. The volunteers who visit or walk or have other regular contact with clients enjoy the relationships that form.

Volunteers who make daily reassurance phone calls often develop close bonds with the people that they chat with and check up on; sometimes the clients even check up on the volunteers!

When volunteers assist with minor repairs, gardening, preparing tax returns or provide a myriad of other services, there is the opportunity for sharing to take place.

There are volunteers who provide our support services in the office, those who do publicity or fundraising and those who do all the other volunteer jobs that contribute to assisting individuals.

We celebrate the work of many volunteers!

The holiday season may also bring challenges. On the back page of this newsletter is an article with some tips to help create a holiday that suits your needs whether you are caring for someone else or just planning for a happy holiday.

*Holiday Cheers!*

### TONY and MIGNON FENTON TRUST

For the third year in a row, a grant has been received from the Tony and Mignon Fenton Trust. Mr. Fenton set up this perpetual charity trust for the purpose of providing assistance to the infirm elderly in Oak Bay, who require home care in order to remain in their homes. We are grateful for his foresight in looking to the future to help others!

The Trustees of Scotiabank, of Scotia Private Client Group, the Wealth Management division of Scotiabank who administer the Tony and Mignon Fenton Trust, are pleased to announce a grant to OBVS as a very worthwhile organization which assists the elderly in Oak Bay.

### ANNUAL DONATION CAMPAIGN

Thanks to our joyful volunteers who have been busy stuffing Municipal water bills with our donation campaign letters over the past few months. We have also done a mail out through Canada Post to reach people who do not get water bills.

There is still time to donate in order to get a tax receipt for this year. Please give as generously as you can, as we rely greatly on individuals for our funding. We are grateful for every donation, in any amount.

### Blighty's Bistro "Love Your Community" Valentine Dinner Update

We hope you have your calendars marked! Our annual fundraising dinner is Thursday February 9, 2012 at Blighty's Bistro on Oak Bay Avenue. Our dinners are always a fun filled evening with prizes and surprises as well as a sumptuous many course dinner including wines.

As you know Blighty's is a charming, intimate restaurant and tickets go very quickly. The price is \$125.00 per person and you do receive a tax deduction for a portion of the amount.

If you are unable to attend but wish to support this event we do sell non-attending tickets for \$50.00 for one ticket, \$75.00 for two and \$100.00 for three. This entitles you to a chance at our wonderful draw prizes from local merchants and others. These tickets are tax deductible for the full amount. Please call the Oak Bay Volunteer office at 250 595-1034 to book your ticket(s), attending or non-attending. We look forward to hearing from you!

Thank you for your support.

*Phebe Chartrand and Sharon Apsey  
(known as the Blighty Bunch!)*

# Oak Bay Profiles

## Bert Dinsmore



By Bronwyn Taylor

Bert was born in Vancouver, July 25, 1928, the fourth in a family of five boys. He attended public school and was always involved in sports, especially senior basketball. As a matter of fact, because of his size, Bert always played sports at the senior level even as a junior in high school. In 1946 he was King Edward High's graduating class president.

Bert became involved volunteering in community activities at a very early age. While attending high school Bert looked after and repaired the sports equipment, was part of High Y, a service club associated with the YMCA, and started the first teen club in Canada, if not the world. It was called the "Fairmont Teen Club" which attracted 346 teens every Friday night for games and dancing. Bert was club president and served as its treasurer for three years.

After two years, Bert left UBC to "explore business", as he put it. In October, 1948 he joined TCA (now Air Canada), working in various areas of sales in the Vancouver office. He and his late wife Helen were married in 1952, and had two daughters. In 1955 Terry, their first daughter, was born followed by Janet in 1959. In 1965 the family transferred to Calgary. Terry eventually returned to Vancouver and Janet lives in Calgary with her husband and Bert's two grandchildren.

During his 35 year career with Air Canada Bert and his family lived in a variety of places, some for only two years, and others for longer: Sydney, Australia; Barbados, West Indies; Toronto, Ont.; and back to Calgary. Despite the constant moving and changing of schools, the girls flourished. They attended nine schools in three different countries, both finished high school as Ontario honour students, and proceeded to earn University degrees.

In January, 1982 Helen died in her sleep of arrhythmia, at the age of only 51. Bert and Helen had long since decided to

retire to Victoria, to the point that Bert joined the Royal Colwood Golf Club in 1980. He carried through with his plan and moved here in May, 1983. Having met his wife Doris in Calgary prior to the move, they married in Victoria the following September. His immediate family now includes Doris' son Jim and daughter Mary, along with four grandchildren living in Prince Edward Island.

Bert and Doris joined Oak Bay Volunteer Services shortly after their arrivals in Victoria, and have been with the organization for more than twenty-five years. Bert's primary activities related to gardening and light home maintenance: pruning, weeding, stair repairs, assembling shelves, packing and unpacking, to name a few. The first ten years he looked after one of our client's gardens. "When I drive, I see hedges I've pruned and roses, and I wonder if people do what I told them to do."

For three years Bert gave a good deal of his time to clearing and tending the gardens of Goward House, and continues to look after 50 feet at the Baptist Church near home on Cedar Hill Cross Road. The view from their window at Uplands Estates is spectacular; Bert looks after the flower beds and shrubs on his own property, even though the strata employs gardeners to tend the whole complex. He also gave me a quick lesson on the proper pruning and care of my much neglected roses.

Bert admits that it is difficult for him to be idle, as he was while waiting for me to do the interview. When I asked what he would normally do he replied, "Be in the garden, in my workshop in the garage, or on the golf course." He practices four days a week, and plays the other three. As Bert and Doris are both avid golfers, it is a good thing they live so close to the Uplands Golf Course!

Bert claims to have golfed on every continent except South America, has played in provincial, national and regional seniors tournaments all over, and main-



tained a "single digit handicap for 55 years." He even played in an invitational for the Royal Hong Kong Club's centenary. For Bert and Doris, it was an opportunity for adventure. This followed with them going to seven more centenaries in South Africa, Guernsey Island, England and Australia. Other travel adventures included many cruises.

In Bert's words, "I retired to play golf." His older brothers were caddies and Bert followed suit. At the age of 12 he began caddying in the summer for 'duffers', gradually caddying for much better players whom he studied carefully, then would sneak on the back of the course to play a few holes. It wasn't until Bert was 20 years old that he played a full 18 holes. He claims to have honed his game in Barbados and Australia, where he was runner-up to the club champion. The climate allowed him to play year-round, whereas he played only about 10 games a year for the time he lived in Toronto.

Bert is still available to do volunteer jobs, though it might be best to catch him on a rainy day, for an indoor job, unless you want him to prune a bush or help you perfect your putt.

Thank you, Bert, for all your years of service with OBVS, and to more in the future.

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## THE BOARD of DIRECTORS for 2011-12

Chair: Jon Watson

Jon has been with OBVS since September, 2003 and has served on the Board since May, 2004.

Vice Chair: Phebe Chartrand

Phebe joined OBVS in January, 2003, was elected to the Board that May, serving as secretary until May, 2011 when she assumed the role of vice chair.

Secretary: Eric Nielsen

Eric began with OBVS September, 2005, joining the Board in May of 2011.

Treasurer: Bronwyn Taylor

Bronwyn became a member of OBVS in July, 2002 and was appointed to the Board April, 2011.

Director: Sharon Apsey

Sharon joined OBVS in July, 2001 and has been a member of the Board since May, 2005.

*The following are brief biographies of the most recently elected members to the Board of Directors for Oak Bay Volunteer Services Society:*

### Eric Nielsen

Eric is a retired pilot who spent over 40 years in aviation, starting in the Canadian Navy and then at Air Canada for nearly 35 years where he flew many aircraft, finishing his career on the Boeing 747-400. He has served on several City of Victoria and CRD committees and prior to moving to Oak Bay from Halifax he was President of the Shearwater Aviation Museum Foundation and a member of the Board of Directors of the Halifax Regional Municipality's Metropolitan Housing Authority. In addition to his position on the Board of Directors, Eric does minor "handyman" projects as well as assisting clients with Income Tax returns.

Eric is married to Carmelle and they reside on McNeill Avenue

having moved there from Nova Scotia in October 2003.

### Bronwyn Taylor

While on a deferred salary leave for several months, Bronwyn read an ad in the Oak Bay News asking for volunteers. She thought this would be a good way to spend some of her time, contributing to the community in which she was raised. Bronwyn began by walking with one of the clients, then added office shifts and new client visits to her duties.

Once she returned to work, Bronwyn volunteered during summer vacations. Since retiring from teaching four years ago, she has continued to work weekly in the office, do new client visits, and assumed writing the majority of the Newsletter.

## THANKS TO CATHIE BALLARD!

We thank Cathie Ballard for her significant contributions over the past eight years as Office Coordinator. During her time with Oak Bay Volunteer Services she worked closely with volunteers, clients and many others in helping to see that the needs of individual clients were met and that volunteers were supported in their various roles. We wish her the best in her future endeavours.

## WELCOME TO RUTH PLATTS!

We welcome Ruth Platts as our new part-time Office Coordinator. Ruth started volunteering with Oak Bay Volunteer Services in 1997 and has done some contract work since 2008. She looks "forward to working with both clients and volunteers" and says, "The many wonderful individuals associated with OBVS make it a pleasure to come to work."

## PUMPKIN ART

Our display case was aglow and flashing for Halloween! The Pumpkin Art show with hundreds of carved pumpkins at the back of the municipal hall brought many onlookers to the area. The show was on for the last four days in October. Our display let many people know about our services and encouraged volunteering.

## OAK BAY EMERGENCY PROGRAM

Hello. My name is Eileen Grant and in August I became the manager of Emergency Programs for the District of Oak Bay. I work with Deputy Fire Chief Dave Cockle and a very dedicated team of volunteers, all committed to ensuring that Oak Bay is a Disaster Resilient Community.

In my new job, I am responsible for implementing Oak Bay's Emergency Response and Recovery plan of which Emergency Social Services and community education are a part. Our goal is to ensure that every Oak Bay resident is prepared for an emergency or disaster that could last for 72 hours or longer.

I am very pleased to be part of the Oak Bay community and look forward to meeting and working with you all over the next months.



## Avoiding Family Caregiver Holiday Traps

Fern said, "I wish the calendar would flip directly from November to January. We just got settled into our routine since Mom moved in with us. As I look at my calendar, all I see are more things on the to-do list, extra burdens, and the chaos of disrupted schedules."

Fern is not alone in her wishful thinking that the holidays would simply pass! The celebration of Christmas or Hanukkah or Kwanza can destabilize any family.

Family caregivers know this better than most; those who attend to the needs of aging parents, a sick spouse, or a family friend already live on the edge of a delicate equilibrium. As Gary so colorfully said, "Since Dad had his stroke, my life is held together with rubber bands and bubble gum. I'm concerned that Christmas will herald its collapse."

This season, intended as a celebration of shared joy and connection with family and loved ones, may often be a time of burden and a reminder of alienation and losses.

Here are several common holiday traps that family caregivers fall into and how to avoid them. It all comes down to freeing yourself from ideas about what should happen. Give yourself permission to celebrate the holidays in a way that works for you and your family. You might find that these tips help you look forward to the holidays, and to truly enjoy every moment.

### Trap #1: Planning for the worst.

Many caregivers think, "This could be Dad's last Christmas, so I want to make it really special." Wouldn't it be great if we came into the world with an owner's manual that included the expiration date! I have seen patients defy all medical odds and laugh about the doctor who gave them six months to live—20 years ago. On the other hand, there are the tragic untimely deaths, and unanticipated events.

Since we simply don't know what will come, we should all celebrate as if this is our last holiday season! Rather than live for the "what-ifs," just enjoy.

### Trap #2 Creating Norman Rockwell scenes.

The idea of a picture-perfect holiday has an emotional tug that's particularly seductive to family caregivers. It's an expression of the longing to return to earlier carefree days of health and vitality.

While there is no perfect holiday celebration, you can create holiday rituals that are perfect

for your family. Say at a family meeting, "Our lives are different this year, so we need to think about how our holiday celebration will be different. What are the two or three things that make the holiday special for you?" You can even ask your loved ones to rate their importance of holiday events or ideas on a scale of 1 to 10.

For most people, it's the little things that make the big difference. For example, the special hand-embroidered tablecloth, or playing board games. It may not be the "big" things that you might have expected. By knowing what makes the holidays special for your relatives, you can create a montage event that truly brings together the best of all worlds.

### Trap #3 Buying your way out of guilt.

For those of the sandwich generation, caring for both our children and our parents, the guilt that someone is getting short-changed looms over us. Who doesn't wish there were more hours in the day so that children and friends (and even the person in the mirror) would get more time and attention? The life of a caregiver leaves big gaps. If you have tried to fill this gap with gifts, you may find that it does not work very well.

All family members, including kids of all ages, need to know that they are loved and treasured. Gifts are one way to say this; what most people really want is more of you.

Consider a different kind of holiday present, like a coupon for 10 minutes of undivided attention each day, or a trip to the ice cream store, or a visit to the zoo. The You Card can include a list of reasons this person is so special to you.

In fact, at a holiday dinner you shine a spotlight on each person at the table, with each guest offering a story that demonstrates why the spotlighted person is special. You can even write them down on 3x5 cards and give them wrapped in ribbon or mounted on a collage. Gifts such as this may mean significantly more to loved ones and they won't cost a dime.

Consider inviting your kids into an act of giving rather than receiving by touching the lives of those less fortunate. Serve a meal at a shelter. Invite a lonely neighbor to your house.

### Trap #4 "Smile!"

The instruction given before every photo captures the tone for the entire holiday season. Over and over we're told there's a right way to feel during the holiday, and that is to

be happy. Family caregivers have a spectrum of feelings that rise to the surface during the holidays, and those feelings may include sadness or anger or disappointment. It IS sad that it's not safe for Dad to live alone any more.

It IS sad if Mother needs to go to a nursing home. Set aside some time to acknowledge those dark feelings. Suppressing the feeling does not make it any less real, and adds to the holiday burden.

### Trap #5 Party on!

If you are a healthy extrovert—someone who gets recharged from being in the presence of others—you are in your element in December. Party on! However, for those introverts who get recharged by spending time alone, or those who have limited pep because of illness, the holiday season can be emotionally depleting. There is still hope for a joyous holiday celebration. It just requires some advanced planning. Plan a social calendar that's reasonable for you as a caregiver and for your loved one. Be realistic about your energy limits before you make endless commitments, and ask family members to do the same.

If either you or your loved one is an introvert, it's perfectly reasonable to respond to an invitation with, "Thanks for the lovely offer. Unfortunately, we have other plans. I'm sorry to miss it." The host does not need to know that your other plans are a nap. You may know someone who has rigid ideas about how holidays are celebrated. Who's on the gift list and what's an acceptable gift and which parties must be graced with an appearance. John says, "Caring for my sick wife offers many gifts. Maybe the most important is the invitation to look at our life in a new way. Almost out of necessity I stripped down our holiday celebration."

Many come to understand that there's no holiday rulebook or present police! Your life became different when you became a family caregiver, and it's time to do things differently.

Free yourself from the idea that there's a right way to celebrate the holiday. Look to your family and decide how to make the holiday work for you, and then adjust the family expectations. That's the recipe for celebrating the blessings in your life and the joy and love you share with others.

By Vicki Rackner, M.D., from [www.medical-bridges.com](http://www.medical-bridges.com)