

Grace Pamela THOMSON (nee Miller)

December 1, 1913 – September 18, 2006

Submitted by her daughter Sheila Lockrem

Grace Pamela Thomson nee Miller was born on December 1, 1913 at Hampstead, London England and was raised in the St. Mary's Church of England Children's Home on Sandy Lane in Cheam. At age 16 she went to work as a domestic and at the outbreak of WWII she worked at Cane Hill Hospital, Coulsdon, Surrey in the Casualty Ward. It was there during a dance for staff and soldiers stationed in the area she met ex-Londoner, Joseph King Thomson, a Private in the Saskatoon Light Infantry. Joe loved to dance and asked Grace to dance as he didn't want her to be a wallflower. And the dance went on



**St. Mary's Orphanage
Hampstead Heath**



**Grace Pamela Miller
Age 5 - 1918**



**Joe and Grace Thomson on their Wedding Day
October 19, 1941**

They were married October 19, 1941 at St. Andrew's Parish Church, Coulsdon, Surrey. Grace wore a plain pale blue dress, she had made herself and they had 6 guests – Joe's mother, his half-sister, the best man and three of Grace's friends. After lunch at a friend's home with pound cake and sherry, they went up to London. On the way they stopped for a drink, where Joe ordered two drinks. The waitress asked 'and what will the little girl have?' Grace was 28 years old and just married.

Their favourite song was `Tea for Two`, later changed to `Tea for Three`. During the war so many things were rationed – sugar, eggs, clothing, etc. Everyone shared what they had or traded ration coupons. They started married life with only 2 knives, 2 forks, several spoons and an orange crate for a cupboard. When Joe brought home a can of kernel corn from his army rations, Grace wouldn't eat it as to her it was animal food. It soon became a favourite at the table.

In 1942 their only child, a daughter, Sheila was born at Reigate, Surrey. Grace was a very proud Mom and would push me around in a huge pram that was bigger than she was just to show me off. Grace worked at Sainsbury's and was in the NAAFI during the remainder of the war except when she and Sheila were evacuated to Birmingham, where she worked at an Electric Factory.



**Grace & Daughter Sheila
May 1, 1944**

When in London, many an hour was spent in an Anderson Air Raid Shelter, especially after their home suffered the effects of a nearby bomb. VE Day was celebrated with a street party . . . lots of flags, bunting and food, then the next day, it was off to London to celebrate with Joe's family.

Preparing to come to Canada was both exciting and scary. Grace went to Oxford Street and purchased a second hand trunk into which she packed what little possessions they had, only to find most of the china broken when she got to Canada. Her favourite song to sing me to sleep was `Don't Fence Me In`. Grace and four year old Sheila left Southampton, aboard the Queen Mary on June 10, 1946.

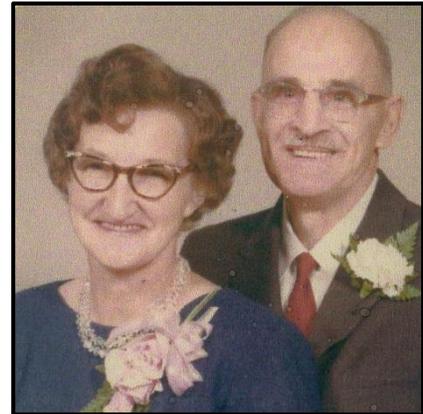


War Brides at Croydon 1946

Mom was so proud that she never missed a meal or was sick during the crossing as so many were. She enjoyed all the amenities the ship had to offer as well as making some lifelong friends among her fellow War Brides. We arrived at Pier 21, Halifax, Nova Scotia on June 15, 1946 and boarded the train for the long, long ride across Canada to our new home in St. Walburg, Saskatchewan. Mom said I lost my Union Jack, waving it out the train window.

Several town folk came out to greet our arrival with gifts of teacups and a lovely lunch. It was all too overwhelming at first for a shy English lass --- Grace's first real home of her own, fully furnished lovingly by Joe . . . even with a doll and carriage for Sheila. Life was so different, outdoor plumbing, wood burning stove, drawing water from a well and the cold and snowy winters. Thinking there would be no vegetables and fruit during the winter, Mom canned everything in sight only to discover fresh produce from the local OK Economy store even at -40 F. Memories of St. Walburg include berry picking with the ladies and an armed man in case of bears and such; train trips to North Battleford for winter clothing; making pies for Curling Bonspiels and most of all making many lasting friendships. Mom loved her new life in Canada.

In 1949 the family moved to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan when Dad's job ended. Grace got involved in the Girl Guide movement as a Brownie leader and later as District Commissioner, taught Sunday School and sang in the Anglican Church choir, and participated in many other activities. After travelling to Grand Prairie, Alberta to attend the wedding of their daughter Sheila to Larry Lockrem on May 2, 1970, they decided to move to Grand Prairie. When Joe passed away suddenly on December 21, 1970, Grace continued with their plans to move to Grand Prairie arriving two weeks before her first grandchild arrived --- a granddaughter Holly Ann, born June 2, 1971 followed by a grandson David Ian Joseph born December 15, 1973. Talk about a proud grandma.



Mom carried on with Girl Guides as a Brownie Leader and District Guider receiving a Canadian Girl Guide Life Member Award in 1984. She taught Sunday school, sang in the church choir and was a licensed Lay Reader at Christ Church Anglican. Grace was also a member of the Canadian Legion Ladies Auxilliary Branch 54, serving as their Chaplin, singing and acting with the Glee Club also receiving a Life Membership Award. Acting was one of mom's favourite things to do and she was involved with the Grande Prairie Little Theatre and Royal Oak Players, behind the scenes and on the stage appearing in plays, musicals, Shakespeare and pantomimes. She received the Jennie Tetreau Award for acting. She also worked at the QE II hospital in the Paediatrics ward and Gift Shop; was Grande Prairie's Volunteer of the Year and enjoyed many other activities.

Grace joined the Alberta War Brides Association, attending many wonderful reunions and after 40 years in Canada, she went home to England for the first time in 1986 on an AWBA Tour. It was her first time flying. Mom and I visited family, friends, Scotland and old familiar places. We made a return trip to England in 1995 with the War Brides to celebrate VE Day in London, also visiting family and friends as well as Wales and Ireland. The AWBA was very special to mom and me – it was so nice to share our heritage.

Grace enjoyed life to the fullest . . . her friends, activities but especially her family. Mom passed away peacefully September 18, 2006 at the age of 92 in the QE II Hospital in Grande Prairie and is buried in Lake Saskatoon cemetery near Wembley, Alberta.

Grace was a very special lady --- small in stature but with a big heart --- one who loved singing and being with friends and family but most of all loved being a Canadian.

Love like a beautiful song, echoes on in the heart when the last note is silent.

Grace Pamela Thomson



Grace Pamela Thomson (Miller), long-time resident of Grande Prairie, passed away peacefully at the QEII Hospital on Monday, September 18, 2006, at the age of 92 years.

Grace was born December 1, 1913, at Hampstead, London, England and was raised at St. Mary's Orphanage, Cheam, Surrey, until she began work at the age of 16 as a domestic servant.

During the war, Grace joined the NAAFI and worked in the casualty ward of Cane Hill Hospital, Coulsdon. At a staff dance for Canadian soldiers, she met ex-Londoner, Joseph King Thomson of the Saskatoon Light Infantry.

Joe and Grace were married in 1941 and daughter Sheila was born in 1942.

In June of 1946, Grace came to Canada as a war bride and settled in St. Walburg, Saskatchewan with Joe and young Sheila. The family moved to Saskatoon in 1949, where she resided until 1971, when she moved to Grande Prairie, Alberta, after Joe passed away in December of 1970.

Grace was always an active person belonging to the Girl Guides, Land Rangers and Girls Friendly Society in England. In Saskatoon she was a Brown Owl and District Commissioner with the Girl Guides, a member of Christ Church Anglican, the ACW and taught Sunday school.

After moving to Grande Prairie, she continued with Brownies and became a District Guider. She joined the Ladies Auxiliary Branch No. 54 of the Royal Canadian Legion, serving as their chaplain for many years and singing in the Ladies Glee Club. Grace was a member of Christ Church Anglican in Grande Prairie, singing in the choir; a member of the ACW; a licensed Lay Reader and taught Sunday school. She was a member of the Alberta War Brides Association

and enjoyed going to yearly reunions as well the special trips overseas to Great Britain and Ireland with her daughter.

Grace was a member of Grande Prairie Little Theatre, as an actress and behind the scenes. She was a member of the Royal Oak Players, delighting everyone with her pantomime performances. She also did volunteer work at the QEII Hospital, Grande Prairie Public Library, Salvation Army Soup Kitchen and participated in the Miniature Doll House Club, Scottish Country dancing and the Grande Prairie Music Festival.

Grace was a Life Member of the Girl Guides, Royal Canadian Legion Ladies Auxiliary, Alberta War Brides Association, a recipient of the 1998 Jennie Tetreau award (GPLT) and received many other accolades for her volunteer work in the community.

Grace will be sadly missed by: her loving daughter Sheila and son-in-law Larry Lockrem of Wembley; granddaughter Holly Lockrem of Calgary; grandson Dave Lockrem of Wembley; sister-in-law Florence Carter of Halesworth, England; niece Chrissie (Vic) Smythe and family of Winnipeg, Manitoba; cousin Muriel (Charles) Boast and family of Harleston, England; numerous members of the Thomson family in England and many, many friends.

We wish to express our appreciation to the staff and residents of Wild Rose Manor, the Home Care Nurses and a special thank-you to all the nurses and staff of 3 North at the QEII and Dr. Anozzi for their loving care of Grace over the last few months.

A memorial service will be held Thursday, October 5, 2006 at 2 p.m. at Christ Church An-

glican, 6610 Poplar Drive.

If desired, memorial donations can be made to the relocation and restoration fund of the old Christ Church Anglican (South Peace Historical Restoration Society) or a charity of one's choice in lieu of flowers.

**OLIVER'S FUNERAL CHAPEL
AND CREMATORIUM**