

YWCA PRESENTS AWARD TO DOREEN ORMAN

DOREEN ORMAN: A VOICE FOR EQUALITY... A STRONG VOICE FOR WOMEN

– by Sharon Montgomery

In June 2010, Doreen Orman received the Ann Northcote Award at the YWCA of Canada annual meeting. This award is given for outstanding contribution to the international work of the YWCA movement at the local, national and world levels. When the time came to receive her award, Doreen was told she had to stand still and listen to all her tributes. Those of you who know Doreen will realize that was hard for her to do, as her humility is as widely known as her wisdom. The mission of the YWCA was reframed over many decades. It now reads: A Voice for Equality... A Strong Voice for Women. This tribute to Doreen showed how she was the personification of that mission.

Doreen started to volunteer with the YWCA sixty years ago, when she was a young mother of Rick and Maureen. Her initiative in creating programs based on need started with neighbourhood programs for mothers and children, and spread person by person, community groups by agency, to eventually establish international development programs. Her ability to meet people where they were and to listen to their stories inspired generations of women to follow her lead. Most of the letter-writers who supported this nomination described Doreen as their mentor, as she set a high standard of leadership. This was Doreen's style: quiet, humble, calm, wise, intelligent, compassionate, informed and dedicated.

In the 1950s Doreen volunteered with young working women and at-home moms. She later was a "Y teen" volunteer with girls at Wm. Aberhart High School. She became program committee chair in 1964, and the next year was a voting delegate to the YWCA National Convention. She chaired a redevelopment Committee to discover the needs of women and girls prior to

initiating the campaign for a new building in Calgary. She served executive positions during the planning, fundraising and construction of the new YWCA building. She volunteered at the Women's Resource Centre which was established under her presidency. She initiated the International Development Education program for Alberta YWCA's which ran from 1974 - 1978. She was the Co-chair of the first Women of Distinction awards in 1979. Representing the YWCA, she was a founding member of the Alberta Council for International Agencies, an umbrella group for international aid groups in Alberta. She served as the first president of this agency, followed by positions on the executive and various committees. She was elected to the Women's Inter-church Council of Canada in 1978/79. She became vice-president of this group in 1995. She is a founding and current member of the YWCA of Calgary Alumnae, and was co-chair 1999-2001.

Doreen also served on the board of the YWCA of Canada and represented them on the Canadian Council for International Cooperation. She was a delegate to the World YWCA Council in Ghana 1971 and in Vancouver 1975. She was an observer for the World YWCA at the UN Conference on Trade and Development in Nairobi, Kenya in 1976. She was an accredited visitor, World YWCA Council, Singapore, 1983; Seoul 1995, and Cairo 1999 where she was also a presenter. In 1977 Doreen received the Queens Silver Jubilee Medal for community service. In 1982 she received a Woman of Distinction Award from the YWCA of Calgary. In 1992 she was the first Calgarian to receive the Governor General's Award in commemoration of the Persons Case. This award specifically acknowledged her work with women and her commitment to equality and social change.

As well as her involvement with the YWCA, Doreen was involved with the Hillhurst-Sunnyside Community Association and Alberta Children's Hospital during the 70s. She chaired the Canadian Christian Festival 1984-86, and has

served in several volunteer roles at Knox United Church throughout her membership here, which continues to this day. In 1993 she was co-chair of the National Gathering of the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada whose theme was "Toward Healing a Broken World".

The following paragraphs are quotes from the nomination letters. They are included so that Knox people will learn more about Doreen and come to understand and appreciate her contributions to the welfare of women and children.

Doreen has worked throughout her life for the advancement of women, girls and children. The individuals who have worked alongside her describe Doreen as a role model, a mentor, and someone who has had a significant effect on their lives. However, always humble, Doreen describes her experiences with the YWCA as her most significant life experiences, providing her with the tools to work successfully in other areas.

The focus of Doreen's volunteer work has always been the betterment of women. She advocated equality for women both in Canada and third world countries and worked hard to ensure that help was available for women and families. She assumed responsible positions in every organization with which she was associated. Her personal work ethic, sense of responsibility and leadership style were respected by all with whom she worked. ... Doreen was an excellent example of a "servant leader", always empowering others to achieve and improve.

Doreen was called on frequently, by other NGO's and Learner Centres working in international development education, to serve on steering committees, to help formulate and deliver briefs to the government, and to look at ways of coordinating the various groups' goals and activities. Her links and

involvements with her community association and her church helped to broaden her base of influence in the international development education field.

Doreen's leadership style has been defined as quiet, knowledgeable, determined, dynamic and supportive. She leads quietly from within a group based on her personal convictions. She listens, acknowledges the work of others and fosters a team approach. In dealing with difficult situations she is described as calm, fair and wise. ... The impact she has had in the positions she held with the YWCA have made it possible for it ...to grow, develop, move with the times and seek new directions. In her work at Children's Hospital she is described as an innovator who "when she believed there was a better way to provide child healthcare, did not let anything or anyone stand in the way." This determination was also characteristic of her ability to initiate programs that were creative, dynamic and ahead of their time.

Throughout her long volunteer career Doreen Orman has contributed immensely to many organizations and to the lives of countless individuals. Her leadership style and her enduring commitment to the programs of the YWCA locally, nationally and internationally are the embodiment of the purpose and the spirit of the YWCA.

Where did Doreen receive her inspiration? Her energy? How was she able to sustain such a long-term volunteer role? Did she ever burn out? She could have chosen different activities, perhaps more fitting to the traditional roles of wife and mother during the 1950s. Doreen attended Business College after high school and worked as a secretary prior to marrying Jack Orman. How did she grow from that role to mentor for so many women? What guided her to engage in caring conversation with each woman she met, from native women and pregnant teenagers in Calgary to sister delegates at World YWCA conferences? I asked her. Doreen got her inspiration from her mother, who

was active in her church, the Women's Institute and the United Farm Workers of Alberta. Doreen has never burned out, although she knew many who did. What kept her going? "My faith. I attended church and always got help hearing the message. The church people were a community who supported each other. I got a lot from working with people of faith, like Kaz Iwaasa. At the Y also, there were such wonderful women who supported each other. During the 60s when the teenagers needed so much I had great support from women there. I've always had lots of energy, and the Y was great for sustaining that. It's my faith, and all the women in my life."