

In the Beginning...

Marjorie Anderson (formerly, Walters)

*Founder of Volunteer Grandparents Society (Volunteers for Intergenerational Programs Society):
1973 to 1980*



Marjorie (far right) with her son Brad and granddaughter Maya

Marjorie now lives in the Municipality of Metchosin, which is a sheep-raising, market-farming community northwest from Victoria. Her two sons and their wives have given her a 3-year-old granddaughter, two step-grandsons, and two great-grandsons. She finished off her work career teaching for Arctic College. She volunteers at the Metchosin Community House and will be on the 2010-11 board of the Metchosin Community Association. She also dedicates her time to Reading Buddies.

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Let me share a bit of history. In the spring of 1963, while driving past Nelson Park in the West End of Vancouver, I heard the usual sound of children happily at play, seeing mothers helping and watching them. Then I saw eight or ten seniors sitting on benches, sunning themselves, and watching the frolicking children. I pulled over the car to watch for a bit.

At that time, the West End of Vancouver was generally home to seniors and Vancouver's newcomers. "Did these seniors have grandchildren," I wondered. "Did these children have grandparents nearby? If they didn't, would these groups want to meet to form surrogate family-style friendships?" I even thought of going over and asking them, but I started the car and left.

Ten years later, while manning the phone lines at the Vancouver Crisis Centre on a Sunday afternoon, I had back-to-back calls from a senior and a mother who missed having a family with whom to share their Sunday afternoons. I turned to Nancy Kirk, the

centre's Volunteer Coordinator, and said "Why doesn't someone arrange for these people to meet each other." She replied, "Why don't you?"

Me? Why not? I could even be a terrible bore when discussing what my family and I lost when we moved away from our own extended families for better employment opportunities. I can go on for hours about the irreplaceable value of grandparents in the lives of emotionally healthy adults-to-be, a place at the table in an extended family, their sense of belonging, and the presence of good role models. My own children had wonderful grandparents. They had another home in which they belong, another yard to play, and another set of neighbourhood children. They had the certainty of complete love and acceptance of Grandma and Grandpa. How can children, without the acceptance of at least one older person, grow up to feel that they belong, are part of the continuum of mankind, are part of something larger, and hence they can become adults responsible for part of that?

Partial preview. For more information on how to order a copy of *Growing from the Roots*, please contact Volunteer Grandparents at info@volunteergrandparents.ca.