

# World peace advocate a bundle of energy at 80

By JODIE LOMBARDI

Nearing her 80th birthday, Helen Tucker is still a bundle of energy. "You should use what you've got as well as you can and as long as you can," she advises.

And Helen Tucker, a life-long community activist, has got lots of spunk energy and a zest for life that many of her friends and family describe as "phenomenal."

No matter how aggressive or overwhelming she appears in the public spotlight, the Mississauga resident has carried with her a lesson she learned early in life that has often been her protective shield throughout the years.

"Don't give in," she states simply. "My mother was a spanker. I learned by age 6 that you stopped being spanked when you stopped crying. I made up my mind that I wasn't going to cry and give her the satisfaction. I won that battle and never got spanked again."

She adds quietly that "I could be hurt and feel very deeply but I could cover. I still have that streak and put on a brave front."

## THIRD CHILD

Born in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1904, Helen was the third child in a family of five. Because she was her grandfather's favorite, Helen says she "had the privilege to do pretty much what I wanted — and I did. I wanted to be everything."

So she sweated it out on the basketball and field hockey teams, was selected valedictorian and graduated from high school in Grand Rapids, Michigan, at the age of 15.

Deciding not to follow in her grandfather's footsteps to become a teacher, she held two jobs to raise tuition money for her French and Latin studies at the University of Michigan.

"It was a hard road to get an education and enjoy life at the same time," she says, remembering her years as a sorority member.

## COMMUNITY SERVER

Her interest in political science and sensitivity to the human condition were developed further when she became involved in the International Club at the school. The blueprint for her future as a community "server" was designed. "I've been involved in international affairs ever since," she says, her blue eyes sparkling.

Her extensive education background in oral expression at various universities, including the University of Bordeaux, France, culminated in 30 years of communications teaching experience at the University of Toronto, making Helen the perfect woman for the "globe-trotting" job of launching world-wide peace missions as the director of the World Citizens Centre.

## WORLD PEACE

Helen talks non-stop about the numerous efforts of world citizen members to develop caring communities for children all over the world and become active in the world peace movement. "The World Citizens Centre is a



HELEN TUCKER

## Very Interesting Person

peacemaker," she explains enthusiastically. "We don't dare now use that bomb."

"You talk things out, you don't fight them out," she says of her longtime role as "conflict negotiator."

Helen says she has always taken the initiative in getting things done. "I didn't hang back," she says emphatically.

## NEW THINGS

"As a Libra, I'm expressive and can fly off the handle at anything I believe is unjust or unfair."

"I'm one who doesn't give up easily. Some might say I'm pushy, I suppose," Helen says.

She thinks of her two children, a son and a daughter, whom she tried to raise with the philosophy that, "with guidance, they should have the freedom to try new things."

"I'm not sure I succeeded too well," Helen says in retrospect. "I was too strong an example."

She settles back in her chair and pauses before suggesting, "I may have given them a bit of an inferiority complex because they began to think I expected more from them than I really did."

## WORST HABIT

Portraits and photographs of her family and eight grandchildren adorn every wall in her simply furnished Douglas Dr. cottage-like home which she shares with her husband of 50 years. In 1941 they moved to Mississauga when the large lot was "just a bean patch."

Tables cluttered with papers are testimony to what Helen describes as her worst habit — being unable to establish the order she enjoys.

"I live with confusion," she chuckles. "I often allow myself too much on my plate at a given time and then can't seem to clear it up. A

lot of other people probably couldn't stand my disorder."

An invitation to a reception from Pierre Elliott Trudeau is lying casually on the top of the heap. Helen, whose friendship with Trudeau began in 1960, not only presented a trophy to him in recognition and appreciation of his peace initiative, but also told the reception of 100 "strangers" about an encounter she had many years ago with the outgoing Prime Minister.

"I have a passion for capes," Helen explains. "He (Trudeau) was wearing a magnificent cape of forest-green tweed and we were walking down the street to a board meeting. I said to him, 'If I weren't on a public thoroughfare, I'd snatch that cape right off your back.' He replied, 'You'd have quite a tussle, my girl. That's my grandfather's cape!'"

Although quick-witted and agile, Helen admits she must "keep repairing the carcass," referring to the hearing aid she should use, the dentures she should have re-aligned and the eye operation she should consider but "doesn't have time for that now."

## LIFE INVOLVEMENT

Even though the years have rounded out her figure, she is immaculately dressed in a blue and white striped silky dress with her softly creased skin glowing beneath neat auburn hair.

She attributes her young-looking features to her excitement and involvement in life.

Helen does concede that, "I'm apt to be overwhelming. I don't insult anyone by talking down to them, but I may make some errors in this, so I may overwhelm them and leave them silent."

But, she certainly wasn't faulted for "coming on too strong" when she met her husband years ago while acting on stage in a play in a repertory theatre company.

Helen Virginia Boorman bellowed out a "horrendous" scream as the Tiger Woman who was dragged through a trap door by a huge claw. William Tucker walked into the theatre on that cue.

"I screamed and he noticed me," Helen says with a smile. "It wasn't long before his attention left the leading lady and came to me."