

Dem's Story

Demetre Helen Pollock née Smook was the third of five children and frequently had responsibility for two younger brothers of whom she was quite fond. Her parents were immigrants from the Ukraine and Poland and the family lived in Winnipeg. In 1939, Dem was married to Scotsman, Allan Roland Pollock. They had three children (Diana, David and Sandra) and eight grandchildren.

Dem's first love was singing. She sang in many different choirs over the course of her life, including the prestigious Toronto Mendelssohn Choir. That talent was passed on and is very much evident in her family. Dem's eldest granddaughter Drew wrote the song *You are a Constellation* which she sang at Dem's memorial service in 2011. Dem had taught Drew how to play the piano on her old Hammond organ when Drew was 5 or 6.

It was not until age 56 that Dem started painting. She had always been interested in textiles and colour but was not given the opportunity to paint when she was growing up. Inspired by her daughter Sandy taking painting lessons, Dem couldn't resist trying out the paints and doing the same assignment as Sandy had been given. When she asked the teacher, a well known artist, if she was good enough to join the class, Dem was immediately given a spot in the class and later became one of the star pupils. Painting became her passion and it gave her a new lease on life. She painted until she was 91 and only stopped because she had injured her right shoulder in a fall and painting made her arm very sore.

She considered herself a realist trying to capture the perfection found in nature. She painted streetscapes, seascapes, landscapes and abstracts in oil and water colours, but preferred painting flowers. Her paintings sold well and were also prized gifts for special occasions. One

of the paintings on display is of the view from the villa used by the newly weds, Howard and Eudora Fergus, and depicts how the beach at Spanish Point in Montserrat looked in the early 70s. It was a wedding gift from Dem. Another is the watercolour of flowers in a jar which Jean Handscombe bought for her parents in the early 1980s as a memento of their visit to the island - a painting that hung in their bedroom in Scotland for 20 years and eventually made its way back to grace Jean's Toronto home.

When Dem came to live in Montserrat, she made a huge life change, leaving her beloved family behind. She followed a dream, found Montserrat and on her 59th birthday took early retirement from her position as the first System's Analyst and the highest paid woman employee at De Havilland Aircraft.

In looking back at her time on island, the work that Dem considered to be even more important than the commercial value of her work was her "desire and purpose to help the children of Montserrat in any way that I was able to do". She put much time and effort into helping develop the artistic talents of many young Montserratians, providing them with the materials which were not available on island. Kevin West was one of her eager pupils and recently commented that Dem showed an interest in him that no one else did. Hilton Samuel was another of Dem's pupils who has never forgotten how much her interest in him and others of his acquaintance helped and inspired them to paint. His brother Keith Samuel actively kept in touch with Dem through letters and telephone calls until she passed away in September 2011. He even visited her in Canada.

Teaching youngsters to paint as well as addressing their literacy skills opened another door for Dem, providing a way for her to use her special gifts to help others.



Water Colour in Jean Handscombe's Home



Seascape at Spanish Point



St. Anthony's Church in Plymouth



Dem and Siblings in 1985



Dem volunteering for Story Hour at the Montserrat Public Library late 70s