



# 90 YEARS

Dear Mrs. Stephens on January 29, 2007 you are turning 90 years young. It is hard to believe, how the time has gone by. I want to celebrate with you and your family this wonderful event. I have been breaking my head trying to think in some thing to give you on your birthday, I came out with so many things that I could give you, but I rejected them all, just thinking in how practical you have been all your life, I desisted of any idea that could be exuberant and not practical saying Mrs. Stephens wont approve of this exorbitant demonstration of affect.

I thought I will paint you something but I desisted thinking that it might no go with your décor. Then I thought I will buy some think nice, but every thing I like was not practical. I could hear your voice telling me that you didn't approve of it, then eureka! It came to me! I would tell the story of how I got to know you, and how important you have become in my life being almost like a mother to me, you have always being there for me, with your love understanding and example of life.

You have influenced me with your kindness, guiding me in my hours of despair and confusion. Advising me for the best decision and helping me to find solution to any problem that would arise. The best present I can offer you, is giving public recognition of the wonderful person that you are, giving yourself to others no matter how difficult the task were, you have been always there not only for me, but also for all who were in any kind of needs. Therefore I am writing this for the memory book that your family is preparing in your honour, telling everyone how you have been a row model in my life, this will be my present to you, and because it is practical you will surely approve.

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I remember, it was in the year 1970, I came to live in Peterborough, My son was only eight month old, I couldn't speak English, and I didn't know any one in that city. For circumstances that I prefer not writing about, but Mrs Stephens knows them very well, I went to live there, rented a small apartment that was attached to the back of a house in Rogers St, it was unfurnished; the price was reasonable therefore I rented it. Someone gave me a used mattress an old fridge, a small table and a chair, one cup and a saucer, some pieces of silverware, a pot and a frying pan. Those were my only possessions, but I thought it was enough to start my new life and with these things somehow I would manage to get by.

Some one sent a counsellor from mother's allowances to talk to me, they put me in their program, and helped me with a monthly cheque, to pay my rent and to buy groceries and other primaries needs, also they put me in the college to learn English, and provided me with day care for my baby.

In this point of my life I met Mrs. Stephens, some people of her church told her about me, she came to see how she could help me. And what was to be done. Mrs. Stephens called in my door, I didn't know who she was and I didn't have a clue she was coming. She smile at me with that characteristic smile of her, then she spoke to me, but I told her I couldn't speak English, then she

make her way in, I was shocked, I didn't understand what was going on, as I couldn't speak the language therefore I couldn't communicate with her. She looked all over the house, opened the kitchen coverts and keep talking to me, but I didn't understand a word she said, I was so scare, I just followed her about the house with out a word, I was not able to ask what she wanted. Then she smiled at me again and left. Who was that lady, and what she wanted? The answered to these questions came to me soon enough.



Irene Abedrapo 1970

The same day in the evening, Mrs. Stephens, came back again, she brought with her a lot of things that I needed, such as an armchair, a television, some kitchen staff, cup and saucers, towels, and also some food etc. etc.

I was happy, and wonder why she is giving me all these things, I was sure that she was some one from heaven, for the love and kindness she gave to my son and me. From that day forward she has been in my life always. Mrs Stephens became my guardian angel, advising me in all my decision-making and she made sure that I didn't lack any thing.

En Peterborough was not English school for new Canadians; therefore I had to enrol in the Algonquin College high school, an adult programme. I was afraid but Mrs. Stephens reassured me saying I am sure you can make it, you will do fine. It took me two years to do this course.

The day of my graduation Mrs Stephens called to find out if I was going to the graduation party, I told her I was not going because I didn't have a graduation dress, then she came that morning to my apartment bringing me a material for a dress and a patter, and she said "here make yourself a dress for the party", When she left I started to cut my dress immediately, by the evening the dress was finish. She was that day as a Fair God Mother and I was looking beautiful in my new dress.

In the end of the course, I had to decide what profession to take, I chose nursing because I all ways wanted to be one. I thought while I am making the money for my living, I could help others in the time that they need more care that is when people are ill.

When I told my friends of my decision of becoming a nurse, most of them where reluctant about this, saying that my English wasn't good enough to take this carrier and that I wasn't going to succeed, but there was my dearest Mrs Stephens, telling me ones more that she believe I was capable to do it and she was sure I'll do fine. Then I sent my application to the school of nursing and I was accepted in Ottawa then I moved there to take my nursing course. Mrs. Stephens was right again, having her moral support I did very well and in September 1975, I become a Nurse.



Irene Abedrapo 1975



After graduation I was offered a job in The Salvation Army Grace Hospital, I accepted because it was difficult at the moment to find job in the hospital of Peterborough, therefore I called Mrs Stephens and I asked for her opinion, again she said that I will be O.K. accepting the position and she gave me her blessing.

Mrs. Stephens kept in touch with me by phone, an some time in person I went to visit her to Peterborough quiet often, was as visiting my mother, some time she came with Mr Stephens to visit me in Ottawa, It was so good to see her, every time I visited I nourished my spirit with her love an care she always encourage me in all my decisions, no matter what it was she give me her blessing.

The years went by in a routine manner until my health started to resent, I was working to hard and I became very ill, I had a major surgery, and after that my health never was the same again. In the advise of the doctor I have to leave my nursing career, Mrs Stephens was always there phoning, offering her moral support, and good advise, without Mrs Stephens' love and care I could never have pulled through, as she never, not for a moment abandoned me. I decide to go back to College, to take Business Administration, in the advise of Mrs. Stephens I major in Accounting, rather than Marketing, as my health was to poor to go for other career. In June of 1984, I graduated from Algonquin College.



Business Administration Graduation.

In September of 1984, I started to work for the government of Canada, as a CR2, in the Correctional Services Accounting Department. Mrs Stephens was very happy for me.

1985 I got married, my husband and my son didn't get along therefore we decided to divorce and continued with our separate lives. That was in 1987 it is not necessary to say that Mrs Stephens was right there giving me her love and support, in that so painful time for me.

After the divorce I continued working in the Government this time in Agriculture Canada as a CR3 in accounting department.

In the end of 1987 I bought a house in Ottawa South, and in the same time my son started college, therefore my expenses increased considerably. I believe that this was the only time that I didn't consider being Practical and ignored Mrs. Stephens advise, and bought the house any way even though I couldn't effort it and my health was very poor.

In order to coop with the debts that I acquired, I started to work in the government full time and do nursing per time.

I enrolled in the Nursing Registry of Ottawa, an organisation that higher nurses and place them when ever was a need for a private nurse. Some time I was sent to hospitals and others to the patient's house, I worked a lot with patients with cancer terminal, in the oncology department, I did palliative care in the home of the patient and in the hospital, it was a very painful experience because you knew that was not cure for these patients, only to make them the more comfortable

possible and make sure that they were out of pain. I had to create a nurse family patient relationship; even though it was painful job I had a satisfaction doing it, knowing that I made a difference of how the patient felt, especially when they mention to me how kind I was with them. For every situation lived I put myself in Mrs. Stephens place, remembering all ways to be tactful and kind, as she always was with me. Giving myself to this patient, being kind and considered with them and specially treating them as I want to be treated, with dignity, love and respect, till the last days of their life. Because I learned it from Mrs. Stephens, as she always treat me and any one else with love and respect.

I continued working full time in the Government and nursing per time; I had a promotions in the Government I was transferred to The Department of National Defence as a CR4, in charge of the budget, I did it until 1992, that year I became very ill and I had to take a sick leave.

All these overwork, for so many years resented my health to the point that the doctors advised me to leave work for good, perhaps take an early retirement that is, and in 1993, I had to take a disability pension as the doctor advised.

These decisions were very hard to make, every time I had to do such decisions I stop and think, "What would Mrs. Stephens do in this case"? And each time I got to the best solution being practical in choosing an option.

I sold my house and I decided to go back to Chile for a while.

I settle in Puente Alto, Santiago, I bought a house with the money I got from the sale of the house in Ottawa. I found myself with too much idle time, after working so much in Canada, I couldn't stand not doing nothing, so I started to teach English to children with difficult to learn this language at the school. I offered this as free classes, to children with low-income families. My son Jacob came with me to Chile and stayed with me almost 6 month, before going back to work. He wanted to make sure I was O.K. and settled.

My son asked me why I don't comeback to paint. He remembered that Mrs. Stephens ones encouraged me to do so, She believe that I had talent. Even in Chile Mrs. Stephens played a very important roll in my life. Therefore my son bought to me an easel and started to paint. I become very good in my painting, Mrs. Stephens wrote to me to Chile often and I use to tell her on my improvement in my oils. And I also did some portraits. Some times Mrs Stephens gave me some photograph of landscape that her son David took to make calendars with it; she sent them for me to paint. I never did exactly what was in the photo I like to change them with my imagination I guess that is a painter's privilege, to change things around.

My health worsened in Chile because I didn't have medical insurance and I couldn't effort to take treatment in Chile therefore I decide to come back to Canada, I did just that in the year 2002, I comeback for good.

Some people from Latin America started a club called The Grand Parents Club. A non-profit Organization in which Latin people that does not speak any English gets together and socialise.

I am a volunteer in this Club. I help with events and other task where I might be needed. The club offers some courses such as English for new Canadians, computer, knitting, etc. etc. One day I had a wonderful idea, I designed a course for painting easy to follow and I offered to the club as free lessons for Senior, with low income and that not speak English and want to learn this art and have no money to pay for lessons. It is a good pass time for them. These courses are a way of relaxation and almost have therapeutic effect for them. They tell me all the time how happy they are learning painting with me.

The idea of teaching these free courses came to me because I always remember that was Mrs. Stephens who introduced me to paint in Canada; she took me to St George Church to take free



painting lesson that the church offered. I always remember how happy I was, doing this course. When I told Mrs. Stephens about the course I designed for seniors she was Glad to hear about it. She was very pleased for me.

Even now, she wrote to me a Christmas card in which she said. And I quote "You do a good job of helping your students to create happy memories"

That is my Mrs. Stephens, always is glad when involved doing good did.

I am sending some photography of me teaching my students. I dedicate them to Mrs Stephens



First Course with first painting



Dictating class



Second Course first painting



Graduation of second course

Now I am teaching a third course and will finish in the end of January

Dear Mrs. Stephens, all these has been possible because of you and what you taught me in all this years, to be kind to other