

FEB. 1988

THE LATE  
ALICE B. DONAHUE

Alice Blanche Donahue exemplified the old-fashioned virtues of service to others and unwavering loyalty to her family and friends. She will be sorely missed.

Born in Red Willow, Alberta, the eldest of a family of eight born to James Alexander Baird, a farmer, and Martha Ann (Stenson) Baird, postmistress. She claimed to be of Scottish and Irish extraction (according to Alice, mainly Scottish!) Her father had taught her early the precepts of service to the community and the value of doing a job to the very best of ones ability. Martha Baird had been a pioneer in the suffragette movement and had encouraged her daughters to be self-reliant and motivated.

Alice graduated from Camrose Normal School in 1926 and returned to Red Willow to teach at the Clara Lynn School until 1931. She then taught at New Norway until 1937 when she married Cliff Donahue and moved to Athabasca. Cliff had come to work at the Athabasca Creamery, which in those days was a most productive business. Cliff had graduated from the Dairy Faculty of Manitoba University and spent his remaining years in Athabasca, serving as Mayor of the town for a time.

In 1937 married ladies were not allowed to hold teaching positions in the town of Athabasca so Alice spent a few months teaching at Grassland School. During the summer, the logging settlement of Spurfield needed a teacher so Alice volunteered. After some months of enforced bachelorhood, Cliff put his foot down and brought her back.

From 1937 to 1942 Alice taught at Fairhaven, a school district 7 miles north of the river. Since there was no bridge at that time across the river, Alice had to go by ferry or cage, or across the ice, depending on the season. She would walk four miles to a farmhouse and then travel with the children of the household on horseback or by cutter.

Alice then taught in the Athabasca Public School from 1942 until 1972. During the forties she had helped to organize the Alberta Teacher's Association in the Athabasca District. Travelling miles at her own expense and giving many hours of her time to this cause. She retired in 1972 without missing one day of school due to illness during that time. She still continued tutoring and

put in many days as a substitute teacher. At her Retirement Tea many who were there agreed with the speaker who testified that the room was filled with love for this lady.

Alice loved to play bridge, and for many years belonged to two bridge clubs. While in retirement, Alice was able to take many trips with her friends, and everywhere they went, no matter how exotic the venue, Alice met someone she knew or had taught.

During the 75th. Anniversary<sup>R</sup> celebrations of the town, Alice was persuaded to go on stage. The part was just right for her. When the curtain came up on Alice with her group of children preparing a drill for the Christmas Concert, the audience gave her a standing ovation. Many of them could relate to the scene. A list of some of her involvement with the community would not go amiss.

- starting as a teenager with the C.I.G.T.<sup>G.L.T.</sup> at Red Willow.
- she had been involved with the Red Cross since 1930. In 1964 she was awarded her Badge of Service. She had been District Co-ordinator for many years.
- She had been a member of the I.O.D.E.
- she taught Sunday School in the United Church for many years.
- in 1946 she was instrumental in the organization of the Athabasca Public Library and was elected Secretary, a position she held until her passing. She was also Treasurer of the Library for many years.
- she has been involved with Athabasca Archives since the Library started collecting artifacts. The Archives became organized in 1975 and she was also Secretary of that organization.
- IN 1977 ALICE RECEIVED THE AL FALLIS CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD.
- she was a member of the Athabasca Hospital Auxiliary from 1952 until 1980.
- she was a Charter Member of the Order of the Royal Purple and had been made a Life Member.
- in 1982 she became a Board Member of the Brick School Committee.

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- she was a member of the Athabasca Historical Society and did a tremendous amount of research for the Athabasca History Book.
- she had been Chairman of the Board of Family and Community Support Services for the past 5 years.
- for 4 years she worked with the Athabasca 75th. Anniversary Committee as Vice-chairman.
- she had organized the volunteers at the Tourist Booth each summer.
- for many years she delivered Meals on Wheels. Taking the week-end duties.

In 1986 Alice was chosen as one of the 'Outstanding Women of Alberta'. Over and above her school and community efforts, her main strength had been her willingness to help other people. When asked how she could possibly do so much, Alice said, " If you live by the precept that you give as much as you receive, what I do, and have done, is just being alive!"



Joan Knight