

Guinness World Record for longest pen pal friendship initiated in Shelburne



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Shelburne born, Ruth Magee holds the Guinness World Record for longest pen pal friendship - one that spans over 78 years and 160 days. Mrs. Magee shares this honour with her lifelong pen pal Beryl Jones, originally from Liverpool, England, now living in Richmond, USA.

Ruth Magee was born one of four girls of Ed and Sarah Legate, who farmed north of Shelburne. Ruth's son, Daniel Magee generously shared her story with the Free Press last week.

Mr. Magee says that as a child, his mother attended a one room public school in SS #1 Melancthon, where her teacher was Miss Marie Jelly. He says his mother believes Miss Jelly knew a teacher in Liverpool, England and that this was the connection. In 1939, Miss Jelly and the other teacher exchanged letters from several students of the same ages, but separated by the Atlantic Ocean, and Ruth was paired with Beryl.

In the early years of writing, Daniel says the letters were mainly about school days and family life. Although, separated by distance, the two women share similar interests and consider each other to be a close friend. "They began writing in those early years and have steadfastly continued and this evolved into their long-lasting pen-pal friendship," says Daniel.

"Both Ruth and Beryl maintained constant contact through their adult years," he says, "including through the war years." Mrs. Magee remembers receiving letters during the war years when letters were censored. "At that time, there was a stamp put on the envelope indicating it had been opened and reviewed," says Daniel.

The friendship continued as both women married and raised children. "Ruth and Beryl both married in the same month of the same year," says Daniel. Beryl to a policeman and Ruth to Earl Magee of Flesherton. Beryl moved to Glasgow after marrying and raised two sons. Ruth and Earl moved a couple of times, settling in Etobicoke to raise a family of one daughter and two sons, including Daniel.

The two women shared joys, and latter sorrows when each lost their husband. Beryl is now widowed, lives in a retirement residence, and is a grandmother. Ruth, also now a widow, resides in a condominium in Etobicoke. Ruth is a grandmother to two, and a great grandmother to one. She keeps busy with volunteer work, including knitting baby hats for the local hospital and volunteering at a

nearby nursing home.

Daniel says Ruth and Beryl still write letters every birthday and Christmas, and share the odd phone call throughout the year. They finally met in person in 1986 and again in 2009. ?Even with the onset of telephones, travel and subsequent internet, they still, to this day, choose to correspond by writing cards or letters to each other throughout each year,? Daniel says.

?The Guinness Record application process was initiated back in April 2018,? Daniel told the Free Press. ?It was only more recently, in December 2018, that they received official notice of the distinguished achievement.?

?Today, these two ladies are both over 90, and amazingly, they are still writing each other,? says Ruth's son. ?As of the current date, they now have over 79 years of pen friendship. He says, ?Although they achieved the record of 78 years in April 2018, they both have their eyes set on reaching 80 years of writing in December 2019. An amazing feat and testament to a solid friendship.?