

## PROFILE OF A BC NOTARY: LADYSMITH

# Joan Phillips

## *Creating a Better Place . . .*

**I** was born in Chemainus in 1951, the fourth child and fourth daughter of Peter and Ina Thorpe-Double.

Dad wanted boys and did end up with two sons, but we girls grew up to be terrific tomboys.

My dad's father was a captain in the Royal Navy with his final posting in Esquimalt. He had hoped Dad would become a sailor, and sent him back to England to attend private school when he was a young boy. Dad would have none of that. He returned to Victoria and was sent to Shawnigan Lake Boys School when he was 13. He promptly ran away. That was the end of his formal education.

By the time he was 16, he had his own trucking business, which grew into a contract logging business and he moved my mom and oldest sister to Ladysmith. They built their home in Chemainus in 1946. In 1954 Dad built the Cassidy Drive-In Theatre, just north of Ladysmith. My parents operated the drive-in all through my childhood. We all worked in the family business as kids.

**Dad wanted boys and did end up with two sons, but we girls grew up to be terrific tomboys.**

We were raised on a 50-acre waterfront property near the mouth of the Chemainus River. Summers

were spent in the ocean, walking the mudflats at low tide and exploring the closer islands, building tree forts, and hunting sasquatch. We'd head out in the morning after chores, and return home for meals and bedtime. When I was about 10, my dad decided we needed horses. He used to hang out at the old Willows Race Track in Victoria as a boy and had a lifelong passion for horses. So horses we had. One year my dad, brother, and I outfitted our horses in full parade regalia, complete with matching studded breastplates (on the horses, that is!) and rode in the July 1st parade.

My entire school career took place in Chemainus. I was a majorette, captain of the cheerleaders for 3 years, a candystriper, and treasurer of Junior Achievement in my final year of high school.

Junior Achievement was an amazing experience. MacMillan Bloedel was the major employer in Chemainus and two of their office staff



Joan Phillips' dad with his Palomino stallion "Pirate."  
The sign shows their combined ages. Pirate was 36.



Joan's son Todd, his wife Hélène, their children Kimberley and Chantal, and Joan's husband Harry at MacTush on the Alberni Canal



Joan's daughter Kelly, her boyfriend Jordan Sundher, and Joan's husband Harry on a recent vacation in Maui

were our Junior Achievement mentors. Each year, the new Junior Achievement group incorporated a company; shares were sold by the "junior achievers" to raise capital to purchase raw materials for our "products."

Our company, Chemac, produced stationery items (writing paper and Christmas cards) which we printed, packaged, and sold. At the end of the year, we liquidated the company and paid back the share capital plus dividends to our shareholders (our parents and friends). It was a wonderful learning experience for a bunch of high school kids.

I always liked working with money and was head cashier at the drive-in during my last couple of years of high school. I think I knew I was headed for some kind of an office career.

I graduated from high school at 17 and landed my first job in a law office in Nanaimo 2 weeks later. My first boss Hugh (Buzz) Heath was a stickler for detail. He strove for perfection. He set high standards for our firm and I knew working in law was the right career choice for me.



With good friends John and Roz Hobbs and their daughter Michelle in Beijing at the Summer Palace

I worked for several firms over the next 20 years, pausing briefly for the births of each of my children. In the '70s, I was a founding member of the Central Island Legal Support Staff Association (CILSSA). I enjoyed the educational opportunities offered through membership in the Association and the camaraderie of other legal support staff.

**I had visions of a relatively quiet practice.**

In 1986, we decided to do some fundraising for Rick Hansen, The Man in Motion. CILSSA raised almost \$90,000, which was quite a lot of money back then. We put on two huge rock-and-roll dances for adults and a teen dance (complete with Terry David Mulligan). We published two cookbooks and held garage sales, bake sales, hot dog sales, and myriad other fundraising activities over a 2-year period.

I taught a couple of night courses in legal office procedures and litigation procedures for legal support staff at Malaspina College in Nanaimo and on the Cowichan campus during the early '80s, while working at a law firm during the day and raising my children. Thankfully, my husband was pretty supportive and has always encouraged my extracurricular activities.

When I was 35, I forced myself to decide what I wanted to be when I grew up.

I was chatting with one of my co-workers, who has since become a lawyer, and she suggested I become a Notary Public. About that time, the Notary practising in Ladysmith retired his Seal. Because I had been living in Ladysmith for 17 years and commuting to Nanaimo, I saw this as a terrific opportunity to work closer to where I live.

I had visions of a relatively quiet practice. I saw myself taking a good book to work, and knocking off early in the afternoons to watch the kids play sports. Dad couldn't believe I was giving up a perfectly good job to become a Notary Public. I thought I was kicking back a little but, in



Joan and Harry on The Great Wall

fact, it turned out I was kicking my life up a notch. I opened my office in Ladysmith in July of 1988, and never looked back. So much for the notion of taking life easy.

I've had many mentors in my life. My mom was one of my mentors. She was a bright, intuitive woman who said the most profound things. I've always admired people who can make a statement that sticks in your head and makes you *think*. She raised six kids and never took sides. She never interfered in any of our lives or told us how to raise our own kids. But she was always there when we needed her. In Grade 6, we all had autograph books and would write poems and notes in each other's book. My mom wrote in mine, "Hitch your Wagon to a Star – Keep your Seat, and There You Are!" I think I'm there now, Mom!

Rick Evans was a fabulous mentor to me in my early years as a Notary. Being a sole practitioner—particularly in the pre-Internet days—could be a little overwhelming at times. It was always nice to know Rick was only a phone call away.

When I joined the Rotary Club of Ladysmith in 1992, I was the first woman member. Walter Brownlow, whom the locals called "Uncle Walter," took me aside after shaking my hand and welcoming me to Rotary. He said, "You'll only get out of it what you put into it." Those words resonated with me and consequently I threw myself into Rotary and have gotten so much from it.



*With the Barbary Apes in Gibraltar*

I think the world needs more mentors. So many people out there have so much to share. It's a shame to see talents and expertise not passed on to others. Many of our youth would benefit from having a mentor.

Ladysmith is my home town now. I've lived here 40 years. My kids were both raised and attended school here. I can't imagine working and living anywhere else.

I think a good sense of humour is essential in this business. I've always had what I describe as an "Etch-A-Sketch" brain. I can be all-in-a-stew about something, but the minute someone distracts me, all is forgotten. I simply cannot stay mad or hold a grudge.



*Receiving Paul Harris Fellow from fellow Rotarian Tom Wickham*

Most of my clients are like old, familiar friends. I enjoy chatting and catching up with clients and making the acquaintance of new clients. Building a strong rapport and keeping my clients informed is important to me and to them. I like to take the time with my clients to listen to their needs and make sure I'm providing the service they expect of me.

In addition to a busy real estate conveyance practice, I do a significant number of Wills and Powers of Attorney and hope to expand more into the area of Representation Agreements. We have a significant aging population who will have various needs over the coming years. I hope to be there to help document their wishes. I recently became a Certified Senior Advisor (CSA).

**I think the world needs more mentors. So many people out there have so much to share.**

Several years ago, I took a number of mediation courses and did the Small Claims Court practicum in Vancouver and Surrey. I have found those skills very beneficial in bringing calm and reason to some situations.

The most satisfying part of my practice is clients who have been referred by other clients. I would say that 95 percent of my business has been referred by satisfied clients, Realtors, bankers, insurance agents, and other local businesspeople and professionals with whom I've had dealings. It's a win win situation!

In the area of community service, I am a past president of our Rotary Club and have been chosen Rotarian of the Year by our club members three times. In my 16 years of service, I've been a director for 14.

I am also currently a member of the Economic Development Commission appointed by the Town of Ladysmith. Ladysmith, like many other communities, has lost its main resource industries. Its most valuable resource is our waterfront.



*Cape Reinga, northernmost tip of New Zealand*

The commission is only 3 years young and we are just getting our feet wet in establishing a vision for the future economic development of our community. There are some who are impatient for development to occur, and others who never want to see it. I'm right in the middle. It's an onerous task to get it right, particularly in the area of the waterfront. Thankfully, we're on Island time.

For hobbies, I love reading. Some authors can literally enchant me with their descriptive phrases. Sometimes I will just clutch a good book to my chest and sit with a goofy smile on my face. I don't want it to end! I've taken up golfing and long for the days when I will allow myself more time so I can get a little better at it.



*Gone Fishing!*



*Golfing at Queen Valley, Arizona*

I enjoy my garden, a rockery-type garden on the beach side complete with loads of heather and a weeping willow on the ocean in Ladysmith Harbour. I love looking at all the colour in my various shrubs, trees, vines, and perennials. I've made myself a super little seating area that looks so restful, except every time I sit there, I get up and start pulling weeds!

My husband Harry and I love to travel. Many years ago, we bought a second home in Arizona and visit there a couple of times a year. The desert is a special place to me. When we travel, we usually like to take our time and



*Disembarking a camel in Morocco*

really visit a place. We spent a month in Spain one year, a month in Portugal another year, a month in New Zealand, and a month in Costa Rica. We even did the ziplines in the Monte Verde Forest—and I'm terrified of heights.

We go to Maui for 3 weeks every other year. We've been to China: We checked out every market, walked the Great Wall, visited the Panda Bears at the Beijing Zoo, did Tiananmen Square, Ming Tombs, Bahai Park, and The Forbidden City—all in one whirlwind week! This year, we're planning to check out the Greek Islands.

Last year, we spent a month in Puerto Escondido, Mexico. Our Rotary Club has sent over 150 donated wheelchairs, as well as a number of walkers to Puerto Escondido. We've partnered with the Rotary Club there to ensure the wheelchairs and walkers find their way to folks who need them. We've partnered with Mexicana Airlines, who deliver them for us free of charge.



*About to do some jungle cruising in Costa Rica*

My son Todd and his wife Hélène and their two children Kimberley and Chantal camp every Summer at MacTush on the Alberni Canal. Todd loves to fish. We generally spend at least one weekend with them in our VW Camper Van. We raised our kids to love the outdoors. We used to spend every Summer tenting at Coon Bay on Galiano Island. Those were the lazy, hazy, crazy days of Summer! My daughter Kelly took her boyfriend Jordan to Coon Bay a couple of Summers ago. He fell in love with the place, too!

Living a healthy lifestyle is so important . . . as is having a variety of friends and acquaintances of all ages . . . enjoying my kids and grandkids and helping them out when I can . . . and giving back to my community.

I'd like to leave the Earth a better place than when I arrived. ▲

[jphillips@notaries.bc.ca](mailto:jphillips@notaries.bc.ca)



*This photo was taken in the airport in Puerto Escondido Mexico. A presentation is being made to the manager of Mexicana Airlines.*



*Harry and Joan at Long Beach Campground*