

Tina de Vries: A Life Well Lived



Tina de Vries, who served as the first Manager of Shalem back in 1981 when Shalem consisted of only the newly constructed 50-suite Manor building, died January 19, 2021. She was 85. A caring person always ready to help others, she became a Licensed Practical Nurse after having 5 children. During the 18 years she managed Shalem, she always said, “I would like everyone to love one another so that we could be one big happy family,” according to her husband Richard who pitched in at times to help with the outings, and barbeques, piano playing and other Shalem events Tina organized, and there were many. Among the highlights mentioned in old newsletters from Shalem Manor, residents chipped in for trips like a train tour to Field, B.C., a trip to Carstairs to see the Olympic Flame, an overnight stay in Kananaskis, a trip to watch the salmon run, and more.

“She was a real go-getter,” reflects current Shalem Court resident Joanne VanKiepmema whose husband was an early Shalem Board member. Tina had the right personality to be the first Manager of the first building constructed by the fledgling Shalem Society and “she dared”, says Joanne. She became a good advocate for the residents, encouraging them to stay engaged, also with the world beyond the building. Shalem was of course smaller than it is now and the average age of the residents was younger. There was no Haven or Court or dining hall or even administrative staff. Tina had a little office that took up some of the space in what is now the Café, against the wall where the television now sits recalls Joanne.

When Tina retired from Shalem Manor in 1999, she left some big shoes to fill. One of the residents reminisces about her in the Shalem Manor 1981-2001 Anniversary booklet and wrote, “After 18 years, I often wonder how Tina put up with 50 seniors – all with different dispositions, temperaments, likes and dislikes. She knew, and we also knew, that she was the ‘boss’. It takes a very special person to control and manage to keep on friendly terms with all of us. Shalem Manor is what it is today, a friendly place to live, thanks to her and Richard.” She ended her tribute with words that must have gladdened Tina’s heart, “We were such a happy family!”

We, the Shalem Family that exists today, are grateful for the caring and leadership that Tina dedicated to Shalem, by the grace of God. With gratitude we join Richard and his family in celebrating her life. Tina’s legacy continues even today since Shalem was chosen as the recipient of memorial donations made in memory of this able, energetic and caring woman.

By Henrietta Koning on behalf of the Shalem Society Board of Directors, January 2021