

Pat Evershed has worked a lifetime helping others

Something a little different for you today.

My last column before Christmas is a good opportunity to tell you about my sister, who was recently honoured by the YMCA with their Peace Medallion for the work she has done over more than four decades to help women and families in crisis.

Pat (Evershed) is older than I am and came to Canada several years before I did. She's been married to her husband, David, for more than 50 years and they have four sons and 12 grandchildren.

In her elegant acceptance speech at the Y, Pat recalled how much she values peace because she was a child of war. She grew up in London during the Blitz. Pat was in her school when it was hit by a V-2 flying bomb.

"To me, this was a way of life and its memories have remained with me to this day.

"I was eight before I understood the concept of peace," she said.

She was given the award for her work with Toronto Police Victim Services and with Canadian Executive Services Organization (CESO).

Pat has worked with and for victims of crime for more than 40 years, first as a justice of the peace in the family court in Newmarket.

If you ask her who was her



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favourite attorney-general, she'll tell you without hesitation it was Roy McMurtry, because he changed the laws regarding domestic violence.

Before those changes, police would not lay charges against the perpetrators. And the victim — usually a woman — would often refuse to lay charges.

"Only when the victim (usually the wife) became very seriously injured — or sometimes, dead — would police intervene," Pat said in her speech.

Quick exit

"I remember the family who always kept their coats and boots on when their father had been drinking, so they could make a quick exit to the police station when he came home after a drinking binge."

Pat also worked for the Human Rights Commission and the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Since retiring, she's worked as a volunteer for Victim Services — going out at all times of the day and night to help people at what is often the worst

time of their lives.

She counsels the families of murder victims and the families of people who have been in terrible accidents or committed suicide.

Her passion, she says, is helping women — especially those who are abused or marginalized.

She has also taken that compassion overseas with her work with CESO.

"I have always been impressed by the resourcefulness and courage of people faced with insurmountable problems," she said at the ceremony.

In Panama, one woman walked 17 miles to attend one of her workshops.

More recently she has travelled to the former satellite countries of the Soviet Union, working to help combat human trafficking. Moldova and Ukraine have been particularly plagued by this issue, she said.

"Young women are lured away from their homes with the promise of employment, usually in another country, and are then raped, beaten and forced into prostitution," she said.

Working with victims is difficult, because even if the young women escape and return to their home communities, they are often rejected because of a strong taboo in



PHOTO COURTESY CESO

Pat Evershed holds her Peace Medallion, awarded by the YWCA for the work she has done for four decades helping women and families in crisis. She celebrates with her husband David, right, and their family — including Pat's proud sister, Queen's Park columnist Christina Blizzard.

Eastern Europe about prostitution.

Real understanding

In my business, I run into a lot of people who like to posture about issues. They spout off about domestic abuse and marginalized women without a smidgen of understanding

of what they're talking about.

How do I know that? Well, I've had the privilege of having a sister who's given most of her life to hands-on work that helps real women in real need.

The kind of person who gets up in the middle of the night to help a family she doesn't

even know in their time of greatest need.

And that, my friends, at this time of peace on earth and good will to men, makes me not just extraordinarily proud of my sister. It is also incredibly humbling.

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