

JEAN LITTLE
1932-2020

Internationally renowned author, Jean Little, was born in Taiwan in 1932, the daughter of Canadian missionary doctors. From birth, the corneas on her eyes were scarred, creating a wall between her and the outside world and setting her apart from her peers. But in spite of her handicap, Jean did not feel sorry for herself or think of her condition as disastrous. She maintained an optimistic and determined attitude which helped her through difficult times. Her limited vision progressively deteriorated to the point that she became legally blind, and she now uses a seeing eye dog and a talking computer.

Jean's love of reading and writing was apparent at an early age. She recalls that her vision sometimes made things difficult, but never impossible. As a child, she used to hold books right up to her nose, and get black ink smudges on her face.

Jean Little attended GCVI from 1946 to 1951. Her favourite subject was English, and she despised Home Economics. She recalls that at the Graduation Dance assembly, one of the most enchanted evenings of her life, she was captivated by a poetry reading by author Wilson McDonald. After graduation, Ms Little went on to attend Victoria College, University of Toronto.

At age sixteen, Ms Little's first piece of writing entitled December Twilight was published in Saturday Night magazine. Her second piece of published writing was the novel titled, Mine for Keeps, which won the Little Brown Canadian Childrens' Book Contest.

Ms Little recalls her early teaching experiences with handicapped children as one of the reasons for writing books that do not give children miracle cures for their problems. Instead, her books celebrate all aspects of life, and provide happy and realistic endings.

Jean Little has written over twenty books and is the winner of numerous publishing awards, as well as the Order of Canada for her significant contribution to society, and an honorary Doctor of Letters (University of Guelph, 1990). In September 1991, a new elementary school in Guelph was named after her.

Joanna Cockerline
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