

From Silver Saddle to Silver Salute: The Touching Story of Mary Dover

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Imagine being born with a silver spoon in your mouth, and wealth so immense it could secure a life of unimaginable comfort and shield you from life's harsh realities. This was the world Mary Dover stepped into. Unlike the stereotypical heiress, content to flit between lavish soirees, Mary harbored a fire in her soul. It wasn't fueled by a thirst for luxury, but by an unwavering devotion to her country and an insatiable drive to leave a lasting mark. This extraordinary woman wouldn't simply bask in her privilege, she would defy expectations and become an architect of Canada's future. Her journey would take her from the trenches of World War II to the halls of political power, where she left an indelible footprint on the nation's development.

Mary Julia Dover, born Mary Cross on July 1, 1905, came from a prominent Albertan family. Her father, Alfred Earnest Cross, was a Montreal-born pioneer rancher, oilman, real estate developer, and businessman. He founded the city's first brewery and was one of the "Big Four" who co-created the Calgary Stampede in 1912. Dover's mother, Helen Rothney Macleod, was the daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel James Farquharson Macleod, a significant figure who helped found and name Fort Calgary in 1875. Due to status, Mary received a privileged education across Canada, including at St. Hilda's School for girls, which was one of the first private schools in Calgary. Her studies focused on art, literature, French, and history, but Mary would later describe herself as a poor scholar and more skilled at athletics. In fact, her horseback riding talent shone so brightly that she landed roles in various movies as a stunt rider, one being "His Destiny", which was one of the first Hollywood films shot in Calgary. Additionally, Mary tied the knot with Melville Dover, a Ford Motor Co. executive, in 1930. Together, they embarked on adventures throughout Southeast Asia before settling in Ceylon, where Mary gave birth to their only child, David Dover. A dark cloud loomed over Mary Dover's world as news of World War II reached her threshold. Without any doubts, she prioritized her son's safety and brought him back to Calgary without her husband. Although torn apart by this separation, Mary refused to be broken and instead, channeled the devastation into purpose.

In 1941, Dover enlisted in the Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC), as her natural leadership and communication skills were a perfect fit. Mary's voice became a powerful force for the CWAC. Her persuasive speeches shattered the misogynistic notion that defending a country was solely a man's responsibility. She confidently challenged the stigma surrounding women in the military. Furthermore, Mary learned of a smear campaign implying that female members of the army were unloving wives and mothers, thus being "masculinized" when they returned home. Being a mother herself, Dover stood up to these false beliefs and expressed how every single woman she knew in the military were hesitant to leave their families, and anticipated the day they would arrive back home. These messages she spread not only resonated deeply, but truly motivated many young women and mothers to follow in her footsteps. Mary's dedication was swiftly rewarded with a promotion to Major in the CWAC. Throughout this, her leadership continued to blossom, leading to her promotion to Lieutenant-Colonel and ultimately, Commander of the CWAC training base in Kitchener, Ontario. This made her Canada's second-

highest ranking female officer. Her commitment and exceptional leadership skills were ultimately recognized with the prestigious honor of Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 1946.

Undeterred by the rigors of wartime service, Mary Dover dove headfirst into politics in 1950. Seeking to extend her impact beyond the battlefield, she ran for alderman on the Calgary City Council. This role offered a platform to champion the betterment of her community, a cause she embraced with unwavering dedication. Her effectiveness resonated with voters, resulting in her re-election, a testament to her growing influence. However, Dover's ambitions stretched beyond the municipal level. In 1953, she set her sights on federal politics, securing the Liberal nomination for the Calgary South constituency. Though a formidable candidate, she ultimately fell short which wounded her deeply. Unfortunately, this heroic woman received more devastating news when she lost again in the 1955 Alberta general election. This came as a great shock, even more so when she heard the news of her husband passing away that same year. Despite these hard setbacks, Mary Dover refused to let frustration conquer her drive to succeed once more. A year passed, and Dover was finally elected to the Calgary City Council, officially the only woman in the aldermanic race. She pursued this career for the following four years, and had a profound impact on issues such as women's rights, vaccinations, local businesses, pedestrian safety, liquor laws, and the preservation of buildings and historical interest. Dover served as a benevolent and influential politician for Calgarians, further demonstrating her worth and effectiveness as a Canadian leader. Although her time on the Calgary City Council came to an end in 1974, her influence on Calgary continued. As a result of her hard work in Canada, she was granted an honorary doctoral degree from the University of Calgary, and the Canada Medal in 1977, before passing 17 years later.

Mary Dover's journey is not only a fountain of inspiration, but it has deeply influenced me already at such a young age. This trailblazer is a true example of unwavering resolve, exemplary leadership, and the epitome of humanitarianism. These very qualities, which I have always held in high regard, have demonstrably manifested in my actions throughout this year, as described below.

First, I am a member of my school's Robotics team. After joining this innovative club, I found that I was extremely keen on learning this subject – I consistently attended all the meetings and even asked my parents to purchase an expensive Lego Spike Kit to further my learning at home. However, I found many of my teammates had conflicting priorities and Robotics took second place. This was disheartening, considering that this is an endeavor which requires the capacity of an entire team. This was particularly evident during the Regional competition, in which some of my teammates were not present. Initial frustration gave way to a sense of purpose. Recognizing the need to reignite team spirit, I stepped into the shoes of the absent team captain and actively encouraged and motivated my teammates throughout the competition. Despite facing time constraints, complex challenges, and quarrelling between teammates, we managed to complete some of the tasks successfully, but also emerged as a unified team, proud of our collective effort. The end picture was much different than how the day began because of the resilience and perseverance I demonstrated. The lesson I learned was to not wait until the last minute to motivate others – if I had done this from the beginning of the year, perhaps the end

result would have been different and maybe even more team members would have shown up to the competition.

Another instance where I embraced leadership occurred within the Debate Club. While I possess a genuine fervor for debating, my partner, was a recent immigrant from China. Understandably so, it was challenging for her to debate complex topics in a live debate format in English. Taking the initiative, I devoted significant time to assisting her with speech writing. Not only did this collaboration lead to strong performance outcomes, but it also empowered her to achieve something that might have been challenging on her own. It fostered a sense of belonging in a new academic environment and boosted her confidence levels. This experience not only served as a testament to my steadfast commitment to leadership, but also was fulfilling.

Finally, like Dover, I yearn to be a humanitarian one day. Giving back to community is the single most important achievement anyone can have in his lifetime. Last summer, my sister and I co-founded a YouTube channel dedicated to reviewing books for children in elementary and middle school. Our goal is to cultivate a love for literature among young audiences. Any proceeds raised through advertising and gaining subscribers will then be donated to the Alberta Children's Hospital Library. Even at my young age, I find immense satisfaction in giving back to the community. In emulating Mary Dover's inspiring legacy, I strive to develop my leadership skills and make a positive impact on the world around me.

In conclusion, Mary Dover's legacy extends far beyond her achievements. A true pioneer, she shattered barriers with unwavering resolve. Like her, I am slowly beginning to understand that true success only comes once I have faced and conquered disappointment. Inspired by her courage, I pledge to use my talents and voice to confront the challenges of our time, building a future where everyone can participate and thrive. That's a future worth dedicating ourselves to, and that's a future Mary Julia Dover would be proud of.

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