

**The following article was written for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service of the  
International Spiritualist Alliance for Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009**

**History is important to us all. When we look back at our personal history, our path from birth to date, we gain an understanding of who we have become. Events, conversations and people in our lives have helped us to grow, changed our thinking and molded us. As we move forward, our history can give us better clarity for our present decisions and thoughts. It has a way of lighting our path from behind us.**

**So it is too with the I.S.A. and the Spiritualist philosophy. Those who have gone before us have given their ideas and ideals to us and with the events, conversations and input of everyone who has led or participated in this Centre, comes the progressive change and new beginnings that each of us can grow with.**

**On this, the 50<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting day, let us spend a little time looking at our past, as a Spiritualist organization and at those whose ideas and ideals have shaped this place we have come to love and grow from.**

**Our founders are: Rev. Beatrice Gaulton- Bishop, Rev. Dr. John Horning and his wife Rev. Doris Horning.**

**The story of our beginning starts with our main founder, Beatrice Gaulton-Bishop. Her introduction to Spiritualism happened during the First World War, in Bournemouth, England, while on holiday, when she first entered a Spiritualist Church. She was so impressed by this experience, that on her return home, she gave up her position as “Charge Nurse” of the Children’s Block of a large institution and devoted herself to studying Spiritualism.**

**She was told by a medium in Bournemouth that she would be a worker for Spiritualism and do most of her work on the American continent. In 1935 she came to Canada for a six month holiday. She fell in love with Canada and decided to**

move here. She was ordained by the late Rev. M. McGuire in the International General Assembly of America. She traveled around eastern Canada and the U.S. until she married Mr. Bishop in Vancouver. She then served churches in B.C.

Rev. Gaulton-Bishop's dream was to create a truly international centre, complete with affiliates, from which all people could learn about Spiritualism. The first Board of Directors included representatives from Canada, Scotland, England and the U.S.

There are a few outlines for special services handed down to us from the early days of the I.S.A., which was originally called the N.S.A ( The National Spiritualist Association of Canada).

One of the most important events for us and indeed all Spiritualist Churches in Canada happened in 1957. Spiritualism was formally recognized by the Province of B.C. as a religion. Here is an excerpt from the N.S.A. News Review of March 1957.

#### *British Columbia*

*The only Province in Canada that gives Spiritualism full representation as a Religion with the same privileges as other denominations.*

*Monday March 18<sup>th</sup> 1957, will be written in the annals of the National Spiritualist Association of Canada as a date to be remembered, for on that day the President of our Association, Rev. Beatrice Gaulton-Bishop, stood before the assembled members of the Legislative Assembly of the 25<sup>th</sup> Parliament (First Session) of British Columbia and read the Prayers for that day.*

*Our President performed this office at the invitation of the Hon. Thomas Irwin, Speaker of the House, a gentleman highly respected by all members of the Legislature, regardless of their political beliefs.*

*The procedure was simple but impressive. Our President was conducted to her chair by the Sergeant-at-Arms, and as the members assembled those of the Executive*

*Council, including the Premier, the Right Honorable W.A. C. Bennett, stopped to shake hands and welcome her to the House.*

*The speaker of the House was then escorted to the Speaker's Chair by the Sergeant-at-Arms carrying the Mace. After a short interval the signal was given by the Speaker for all to rise, and the President of the N.S.A. then stepped forward before the assembly to the desk where the prayers for the day were placed, and read them as set forth, after which the Lord's Prayer was reverently recited by all, including those occupying seats in the Visitors Gallery. Seats were then resumed and the business of the day commenced.*

*British Columbia has the proud distinction in the minds of all Spiritualists in this vast country of ours as being the ONLY Province which gives the ordained ministers of our faith the license to solemnize marriages in accordance with the rights and privileges of other denominations who have ordained minister.*

*The Vancouver Sun of this date acknowledges that "History was made on Monday when a woman minister said opening prayers – Rev. Mrs. Beatrice Gaulton-Bishop of Vancouver's First Spiritualist Church"*

**As we go through this service and through our meeting this afternoon let us remember those who got all this started and let us further give thought to the progression of ideas that so many others have brought to our Centre over these past 50 years. We are blessed by our history. Let us bless those who come after us by our stewardship of the I.S.A.**

**Rev. Lyn Wells**