

A TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL (MICH) OZEROFF

(Deceased Sunday, October 23, 2022)

Mich “appeared” in my life in and about October 1958 as I was trying to contact the Saskatoon Doukhobor Youth Choir which I had heard were about to have their first choir practice for the 1958-59 season.



Not only did I meet Mich but I was also enriched with a lifelong association with over thirty (30) Doukhobor Youth from all regions of Saskatchewan. All of which became a “game-changer” for my personal growth.

One of those Youth became my one and only wife, Marilyn.

There were four (4) of us that became a foursome in Saskatoon (Michael Ozeroff, Keith Tarasoff, Alfred Kabatoff and me). We often joked about, who would live the longest..... I pulled the “short straw” as it came to pass.



I will use this opportunity to mention some of the many events that contributed to our appreciation of Mich and I. We looked forward to being together as many times as it was feasible in our lives. Laughter was our byline.....

The Biography has listed all Mich’s achievements but here are a few memorable events that will remain in infamy that deserve mention:

1. Mich would come into Saskatoon on weekends. On one occasion, the winter of 1960, we sat in his car about Avenue J and watched the snow come down. It was a difficult time for me, and I was suffering from depression and frustrated with my classes. Mich suggested that he take me to his farm for a change in my environment. I protested as I had considerable homework to complete. Mich said “we have a major piece of homework right here across from me. Let’s go!”

Those of you who have travelled West on 33rd in the wintertime, know that at best, it can be termed a “whiteout”, but my friend did not seem to be at all concerned. I started to become apprehensive after a time and remembered the six (6) Psalms that my mother tried to teach me as a child, but I just did not seem to be able to remember nor recite. Triple Integration in Calculus was much easier. My mind drifted to this as the snow blocked all vision of the road.

We eventually turned right to a road due North and suddenly stopped. Mich delivered a speech as follows: “the access road to my place has drifted in and so we will need to cross a stubble field now,” he calmly explained. “See those two fence posts? They are the opening to a gate. We

need to enter dead center,” as he started to back up his 1954 Ford. His reverse speed was equal to his forward as the poor car screamed in complaint.

“Okay, here we go”, he revved up into second and we careened down the road. The next thing I heard was “I would say, about now”, as he wheeled to the left while the snow completely blurred out vision as we hit the snow drift.

I went back to my six (6) psalms and recited the first two (2) completely as the Ford began to slow in the deep snow until it finally came to a stop.

“Button your coat as we are walk now”, he opened his door and stepped out. I realized this was not the time complain but I also was not sure just how much more time I had on this Earth, but I fell into line behind him. I had to stay close as the drifting snow was filling his footsteps very quickly.

I was in to my third (3) psalm when I asked, “how do you know where you are going”? It was as cold as it can get in Saskatchewan, and I was just not sure how much longer we could last.

“See that yard light over there?” he pointed ahead of us. With some effort I was able distinguish a faint glow on the horizon. “When we get there, we are home”,

An eternity later (in my opinion) we walked into the house to a loud welcome “Eyeta Tye Meekefore” as his mother welcomed home her favourite son.

Mich should have been a psychiatrist, because I forgot all my other problems as I was so thankful that we were alive.

2. Someone told me a secret that Mich was a friend of Saskatchewan Power. Apparently, the fields were getting longer, and Mich may have fallen asleep because he failed to make a turn at end and ripped out a few power poles. When I asked him about this, his response was “who told you?”
3. He did share this story about his truck starter that was malfunctioning. It was time to drive home for Lunch and he used his ingenuity to start the truck as his ignition would not do it. Apparently, he leaned a steel bar on the gas pedal, turned the ignition on and then pushed the truck with his tractor. When the truck would appear to start, he would run off his tractor to jump through the open truck door. Then he went to shut off his tractor.

Well, the system worked well but the truck was faster than Mich could run and continued until it hit a brush pile and abruptly stopped with a crushing noise.

Of course, all accidents had to be reported to the RCMP prior to one receiving Saskatchewan Cooperative Insurance. So, Mich went to see the RCMP in Saskatoon and was asked "please outline the details of the accident". Mich's response "do I really have to?"

4. One day Mich called that he was arriving at the Castlegar Airport on business and could I pick him up. I was busy renovating my house in Genelle and transporting lumber on my pickup from one area to another. I had parked the pickup on an incline so that the lumber would be easier to remove.

I left both doors open so I would be able to hear Cion Dion sing "Argentina" on my tape deck. Over my shoulder I noticed my truck slowly moving backwards down the hill because I had failed to engage the Emergency Brake. I considered jumping into the truck to stop it but decided that it was not safe, and then I watched as my truck door hit a birch tree and bent all the way around before the truck stopped.

All I could think of and say, "damn it Mich why did you have to come for a visit?" as I pushed the door to close as much as I could and tie it so that I could go and pickup Mich.

Yes, Mich asked me, "what happened to the truck door?" as he climbed in through the Driver's side.

My meek answer "do I have to?" followed by hilarious laughter.

5. Ozeroffs and Verigins decided to go to Hawaii for a holiday. We ended up in Maui and Mich wanted to fish in the worst way for Mahi-Mahi. The challenge was that all fishing had been exhausted in the first instance and secondly it was very expensive.

Mich always prided himself as being a successful negotiator and stopped by a booth on the street and was told that it was \$175 per person to go out for four hours as payment for boat and tackle. He was okay with that, but I did not like fishing that much and initially refused.

But we ended up at a Yacht Club where there were four (4) Tour Guides lined up, advertising to take clients out to fish. Mich went to see the first booth and came back saying "well this guy is cheaper than the last one and wants \$150 per person. I still did not bite.

I wandered down the dock and met with the guy in the last booth and asked him for his price which was \$85 a head and we could go the next morning. Mich did not like his friend getting one up on him but his desire to fish overcame his feelings.

Off we went with another couple from Connecticut but there were only four (4) stations and gear, so we had to rotate fishing positions. Lo and behold, the two Mahi-Mahi we caught were on my turns.

Mich had a temporary problem with that too but after Dorthy and Marilyn cooked the fish in butter and served a few times in our Condo, he decided it was not worthwhile talking about and we enjoyed the experience.

6. The Saskatoon / Blaine Lake Choir came visiting to Castlegar during the Christmas Season. We had bought a "Doctor's Set" Christmas present for our son Kim and we were joking around with it.

Some of the Kootenay Choir had invited us over and Mich and I decided to accept their invitation. We had been "cheering" each other that day and Mich decided to borrow the Doctor's kit (just in case)

We arrive at the first house with Mich wearing the doctors cap and holding this big syringe. He announces that he is a "cat doctor". The family admitted that they had a cat but that it would go visiting often and the neighbors did not approve of that. Well Mich offers "I can treat that problem and asked the youngsters to get their cat.

They had one look at Mich and noticed his syringe and so they never did find the cat or so they said.

7. It was a sunny Sunday in Saskatoon and so Mich and Keith decided they wanted take Marilyn and I for a Sunday drive downtown. We just started on Second Avenue when both Keith and Mich decided to open Driver's and Passenger doors and stick their feet out.

They synchronized pushing with their outstretched feet on the asphalt, while Mich jerked on the gas pedal. At the same time, they would push back on the front seat.

This was all for spectator entertainment on the Sunday streets in Saskatoon. Well, the boys in the front were not too petite and on one of their pushes, they ended up breaking the front seat restraints and ended up on top of Marilyn and me. We all lay there in fits of laughter as some passersby became concerned and asked, "is anyone hurt?"

It took awhile for us to get our composure and apologized for creating a scene. It was Second Avenue in Saskatoon after all.

And so, Mich and I laughed a great deal, and these are the type of stories that will remain with me in my recollections of him. I apologize to the family for recalling these stories, but I do know that Mich would be smiling right now.

I would like to sing a song "Monotonously Rings The Little Bell"

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