

## TRIBUTE TO IRENE (NEE LEGEBOKOFF) TAMELIN

This is my tribute to my friend of sixty (60) years, whom I have loved and respected.



Irene and I met in 1958 when we were teenagers: she was 19 and I was 17. A youth choir from Grand Forks was invited to visit Saskatchewan and take part in concerts and festivals. She was a member of this Choir. I was a member of the Saskatoon Doukhobor Youth Choir. Little did we know but our husbands to be, had also met as teenagers in British Columbia when Lorne began to work for Verigin Industries Limited.

Both couples married within a week of each other in December 1961.

When Elmer and I came to B.C., in the Summer of 1962, Irene would travel all the way from the North end of Castlegar to the South end of Kinnaird to pick me up to attend prenatal classes. Our daughters, Nona and Lorene, were born one week apart. In total, each of us have four (4) children. We would speak on the phone often. These were the years that our families bonded.

Our children all attended Sunday School at the Castlegar Doukhobor Prayer Dom. Irene and I spent several years teaching Sunday School Classes and eventually adding life lessons to our prayer services. These were teachings which came from the Doukhobor guide for living a peaceful Life – Be ‘Devout’. One incident that I remember is when one boy was asked to say a prayer at a Christmas Service. He glanced across at his mother and asked her "Mom which one should I recite?"

She answered "Cheetye Kakoi tey znighish".

He responded with, “but Mom I don’t know that one!” Irene and I wanted to laugh out loud but we refrained and just “rolled our eyes” at each other.

Once we asked the children about their favourite hymn, Together they would shout in unison, “Mne Okonchley Sobranyou,” (our Sunday School session is over).

Irene took part in the formation of the Doukhobor Cultural Association (DCA). This was a discussion group attended by seventeen (17) couples, who belonged to the three (3) different Doukhobor organizations. We worked, we played, we prayed, we sang, and we laughed together, with no prejudices ever plaguing us.

In the early 1980’s we became part of a new organization, the Doukhobor Benevolent Society and with financial assistance from BC Housing, constructed a ten (10) unit Seniors Housing Complex on Second Avenue in Castlegar. We managed it for twenty-five (25) years and after it was debt-free we donated it back to BC Housing.

The DCA sponsored Doukhobor Sports Days at the Campbell Field near Mount Sentinel School grounds, which were attended by all the Doukhobor groups.

We were part of the Kootenay Doukhobor Historical Society and participated in Doukhobor Village activities and services. We regularly made lunches at the Doukhobors of Canada Petrov Dyen services.

We also created Whatshan Lake Retreat and later donated all the assets to the Doukhobor Heritage Retreat Society #1999. We also became members of the organization and remain involved to date. The men used their carpenter skills to create the buildings while the women of nicknamed ‘the Wild Women of Whatshan’, catered meals for weddings as well as for Interior Health Authority conferences.

The DCA was able to generate a substantial amount of money and funded the feasibility study and initiated the Kootenay Columbia Seniors Housing Cooperative at Grandview in Castlegar. The Tamelins and Verigins purchased bungalows and then lived three (3) doors apart.

The women at Grandview started raising funds for the Seniors Manor which was in the planning for the final project. We raised several thousands of dollars by making Noodles. Irene was our 'Chief Lapsha Machine Setter' at the Brilliant Cultural Center.

All these projects required well-structured executives to look after the essentials such as finances. Irene served on all these executives, with all her abilities, such as planning and arranging events.

During the Summer months we enjoyed camping together at Green City where there had been a Gold mine at one time. These campouts carried on over twenty (20) years.

One year Irene and her 'guard dog' Bingo, Elmer, and I, decided to go huckleberry picking during one of our visits to Green City. Well, I happened to hear a scream, "Bear", and I came upon Irene with her guard dog sitting on top of Elmer with no Bear in sight except Fred Voykin with a smile on his face.

We loved to make fun trips to Spokane. One year, Tamelins, Verigins and Varabioffs took one of these trips. We were stopped at the Border coming home and Lorne was driving and so he was asked if we had any liquor. He replied, "no". The next question was asked "are you sure?" The answer "well maybe a few bottles of beer." We were directed to get out of the car and every inch was searched. Irene's reaction was "Loornee, you should have told them the truth in the first place."

Everyone that knew her enjoyed her witty, kind, gentle, caring, and compassionate nature.

There were times when both Irene and I were labelled 'Perfectionists' by our families and a few others. Both of us knew that we weren't perfect, but what we expected from others is that they live up to their potential and do things as best as they could. After all, both of us had been teachers.

Irene left a legacy to the world. Her four (4) beautiful children, which she loved and nurtured unconditionally. They, in turn, responded by living peaceful and purposeful lives.

I will forever be thankful that all of them have been part of our lives.

Her final arrangement of an event was today. She always wanted people around her. She got her wish: her family and friends under one roof!

Irene, rest in peace, my forever friend.

Composed and read at Irene's funeral by:

Marilyn (nee Verishine) Verigin

June 13, 2023.