

ANOTHER HOLIDAY TO THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES, JUNE / JULY 2023 PART I

Marilyn and I completed our sixty-fifth (65th) trip from British Columbia to Saskatchewan and Manitoba, this Summer 2023. This blog will consist of Part 1, Castlegar, B.C., to Saskatoon, Sk., June 20, 2023, through June 25, 2023, and Part 2, Saskatoon, Sk., via Benito Mb., and Regina, Sk., to Castlegar, B.C., June 26, 2023, through July 04, 2023.



Our send off was a Father's Day family celebration, June 19, 2023, at the home of Son Kimball and daughter-in-law Lora Verigin in Fruitvale, B.C.

Back row, L to R;

Jason Startup (Lora's brother), Judy Startup (our Swaha, Lora's mother); Tyler Hlookoff; Scott Onischak; Tori Apostoliuk; Garrett Kucher; Solomon Burk; Lori (nee Verigin) Woodhouse); Rick Woodhouse; Nigel Burk; Kimball Verigin

Center Row L to R:

Jack Startup (our Swat); Abby Verigin; Tamara Verigin-Burk; Nona (nee Verigin) Kucher holding Misha Burk;

Third Row L to R;

Kyle Burk; Nancy Startup; Kara (nee Chahley) Hlookoff; Elmer Verigin; Marilyn Verigin; Danielle LaRoque (partner to Nigel Burk); Lora (nee Startup) Verigin

Sitting Fourth Row L to R:

Sloane Hlookoff; Ashton Hlookoff; Xander Burk

It was great to have the combined families of our "Swati" Startups, (our daughter-in-law Lora's parents) and our son Kimball join in a celebration of all the fathers on the day designated as Father's Day. A gourmet Breakfast was prepared by Kimball and Lora and enjoyed by all.

Marilyn had little time to unpack from a return from Whatshan Lake Retreat on June 18 and then repack for a two (2) week Prairie trip leaving on June 20, 2023, but she managed somehow as she was accustomed to over the years. We are never sure if it may be our last time driving our faithful 2010 Focus but we were excited to once again enjoy visiting old friends and those relatives that were still around.

Our usual early morning start was delayed as we needed to attend to last minute issues, but we finally were on Highway 3 at 1:00 P.M. I was disappointed that our regular travelling fare of a piece of garlic sausage with a slice of bread was substituted for a sausage and egger from A & W, but tasty all the same.

Over the years, we had various objectives for our first day as follows:

1. Our early years travel expenses were controlled as money was used for gas and so we strived for a marathon trip from Castlegar to Marilyn's parents on the farm in Langham which required fourteen (14) hours depending on the weather. Marilyn's mother would always have her dad procure a duck from the Hutterite Community near there as she knew I had a "weakness" for roast duck. So, arrival time was set for supper at about 6:00 P.M., CST. This meant a departure time from Castlegar at 3:00 A.M. PST. At first, we would bundle up our young family and they would wake up down the road but then there were complaints at the early departure time and soon we were leaving later but the arrival time on the other end did not change. Then there were complaints that the Driver was speeding but somehow it all worked out in the end and my "favourite" mother-in-law, always had the "arrival banquet" ready for her hungry family when they arrived.
2. In later years we stopped at either Lethbridge or Medicine Hat, depending on our departure time from Castlegar. This seemed to work out well as there was a casino in both cities that soon became an attraction as our children stopped being passengers on these trips and the adults were attracted to the "games". Stopping at eating places became more acceptable as the Driver needed a rest anyway.

On this trip with a late start, we decided that Lethbridge would be our overnight stop as we were in the longest days and night driving would not be necessary as the "aging Driver" was getting fussy and preferred to drive during the daylight more so now.

Marilyn was thinking about the Celebration of Life for her Aunty and Cousin Verishines which was set for June 24, 2023, but she could not remember if she had an appropriate outfit. This necessitated a stop in Cranbrook at the Church Second Hand store which we had visited before. I remembered that it was in the Industrial area on the North side of the tracks. It was easy to find as we just remembered it was the "Thrift Store". Marilyn is a smart shopper. About an hour later we were back on Highway 3 East to Fernie.

We were both getting hungry, and it was time to stop and rest as well. Over the years the restaurant just



beside the Three Sisters Motel had been favoured by us. It had a rustic décor but well appointed with an inviting staff. We looked over the menu and placed our order with the server who was anxious to please us in every which way.



We had time to talk and discovered that she had migrated from Holland with a very Dutch name that she suggested we could just call her Evelyn to make it easier to pronounce.

Of course, we had to advise her that we had travelled in the Netherlands back in 1980 with our family of four (4) children. Our memory was of housewives on bicycles shopping for a limited number of groceries for each day of meals.



She in turn shared stories of life in Holland as a young girl. She emigrated to the East Kootenays, attracted by all the promotional literature about mountains and skiing which she enjoys very much.

Yes, we could not finish our meal and Evelyn provided a container to take along with us.

Refreshed, fed, and watered, we continued back on Highway 3 along our familiar route. Verigin Industries Limited (a corporation that involved my brother Lawrence, Russel, brother-in-law John Khadekin, Cousin Fred Ratushny and a friend Gordon Laarz, had made a strong presence in the community of Elkford at the top of Fording River North of Sparwood, B.C. We had developed a Shopping Center, and Hotel under Elkford Square Limited and constructed the original Village Offices, Fire Hall, Service Station and three (3) apartments in a three (3) year span. We initially provided deficiency services to Fording Coal for the first fifty (50) housing units constructed in Elkford by Dawson Construction.

Yes, I recalled, we needed to travel Highway 3 from Trail and Castlegar many times with our crews and we lodged in the Construction Camp operated by Fording Coal. This sign provided many memories at the junction of Highway 43 to Elkford. Our company did very well on all the construction projects but alas, the development company did not fare too well as “absentee management” for a hotel is never a good idea with an operation heavily involved with liquor sales.



Our crews wrote a song that was sung for many years and which I sang s follows:

“Elkford, Elkford go to H--I

Tried so hard

Didn't do so well.....”

We should have stayed with construction which was our knowledge forte in retrospect.

Driving through the former communities of Michel and Natal and recalling the coal industry as it existed in the early years, I couldn't help but smile at the environmental improvements that Teck was implementing after the open pit mining operations. I had to say Bravo, Bravo to Environmental Engineering.

Crowsnest Pass provides an interesting transition from mountains to prairies. No matter how many times we travel through this area, there is always something that we did not notice before.

We had started a routine, when travelling with our children, where we would lift our feet so that “we would not trip over the border crossings. By habit, Marilyn and I lifted our feet as we crossed from British Columbia to Alberta.

Crowsnest Mountain is on the North side of Highway 3, “guarding” the entrance to Crowsnest Pass. I saw this mountain in 1955 on my first trip to B.C. in the back seat of John and sister Mary Khadekin’s car. Mary confided to me that this is her “special mountain”.



Every time we pass by, Marilyn would remark “there is Mary’s Mountain!”



It is always exciting and mystical when we pass the devastation and rockslide from Turtle Mountain that buried most of Frank, Alberta in 1903. The powers that are within static nature suddenly become a gigantic force as gravity changed the mountain

into huge boulders as the clay seam in the rock layer succumbed to the plasticity caused by years of water being absorbed.

It would have been an incredible site to behold!

Then we approach Lundbreck, Ab., where the land changes to various plateaus that are navigated by the



Crowsnest River. The Lundbreck Falls are



located on the South side of Highway 3. A developed campground is a sanctuary for weary travellers. I caution that it is usually very windy at this location.

When we get to Lundbreck, the open flat prairie begins and that is where Marilyn and I need to stop and get out of the car. After all, we were born on the open prairie and “endless sky”. After being “cooped up” in the mountains, we have the natural desire to take a deep breath of freedom and suck it all the way down to the bottom of our stomachs.

“We are free, again!” was the sensation.



We arrived in Lethbridge at 0830 MST and went to our favourite Motel. There are several of them adjacent to the Lethbridge Casino on the East end of Lethbridge along Highway 3. It was a 5-minute walk across a vacant lot, West to the Lethbridge Casino. It was heavily populated with Saskatchewan Prairie Dogs that scampered out of our way.

My interest in casinos has waned to a very little but Marilyn still enjoys the thrill and sounds of a machine and so we do not argue but respect each other's interests.

She, in turn, let me have a refreshing drink of Rum and Coke.

There is a very good breakfast in the motel which is part of the room rate, and I went for a walk early and was able to capture this wonderful sunrise.



I have had the opportunity to live in British Columbia since 1963 and I had worked every Summer between 1955 and 1963 and what I missed most is the "open sky". It is difficult to surpass a prairie sunrise as in this photo taken in Lethbridge. It seems like the World becomes "alive" as the Sun graces the horizon.



Soon we were on the road again to Medicine Hat, Ab.

Utilizing the Oldman and St. Mary's Rivers for irrigation has made the flat lands very productive with Sugar beets, Corn, Beans, Potatoes, and other basic vegetables for our

diets.

This gigantic irrigation assembly is typical of what we saw on all sides of Highway 3 as we drove through Coaldale, Taber, Bow Island and East towards Medicine Hat.



This field of Corn provides an indication of the scope of the farming operations which produce the famous and tasty Taber Corn.

Unfortunately, we were a few weeks too early to purchase our corn directly from the Vegetable Stands that are usually located along Highway 3 as it passes through Bow Island and Taber.

After an hour and a half, we pass the large Airport on the West side of Medicine Hat. It brings memories of the stories related by one of my co-workers at the Sulfite Mill in Prince Rupert who vividly described his experience in training the young recruits as “flyboys” in preparation for the War II in Europe. “The flat lands were excellent training areas, but it did not prevent some of the boys to still crash on their solo flights.” Then he reminisced, “I was not afforded the time to really train the boys to be experienced pilots as when they took off from England for occupied Europe. Many never came back.” I always sadly remember this story as I drive by the Airport.

Of course, we “needed a break”, Marilyn reminded me as we approached the East end of the ‘Hat and yes, another Casino loomed on the Left side of Highway 1 (Highway 5 ends at Highway 1 in Medicine Hat).



This Casino had provided memories as well. Brother Russel and sister-in-law Tillie missed the dated meeting place at the junction to Highway 1 and caused Marilyn and I to wait (very concerned) that they may have met with an accident. Soon they arrived from the East and Russel could not get that smile off his face as they had missed the designated check point and when they saw the Casino, they decided to “try their luck”. Russel hit a Jackpot of \$2,500. He celebrated by buying us all lunch.

Marilyn did not stay long but accepted a small winning as we continued to Swift Current on the four lane Highway 1.

My studies reminded me of the Ice Ages that existed at one time over the prairies with the leading edge estimated to be about a mile and a half high. This edge would typically be situated from West to East and thus all the rivers drain from the high ground of the Rockies to the lowlands from Winnipeg to Hudson’s Bay.

The North and South Saskatchewan Rivers, Columbia, Oldman, and Kootenay Rivers all begin with an area near the Columbia Ice Fields. The Saskatchewan Rivers as the Oldman River, all drain to the East to Hudson’s Bay. They were further formed by the melting ice edge that kept changing with the climate. The ice movement created the coulees that bordered Highway 1 as we passed through to the Saskatchewan border.

Oh yes, Marilyn and I lifted our feet again so that we would not trip on the Alberta – Saskatchewan border crossing.

Two and a half hours out of the ‘Hat, we arrive in Swift Current. Highway 4 North to Saskatoon intersects Highway 1 and usually the Restaurant just beyond the underpass and on the East side of Highway 4 is our choice for good eats. There were earlier trip memories of the bar and VLTs at the North side of this facility where Marilyn and I made up after a spat at her father’s farm over transporting an old wood kitchen stove back to Castlegar. We did not talk much until we had



checked in to a motel in Swift Current and then Marilyn convinced me to drive her to this facility so that she could play VLTs. Reluctantly, I drove her there with the intent of having a Rum & Coke while she played \$20 of quarters. There were just a few VLTs and so after playing, she motioned me to come and try her machine as all the rest were busy. Not wanting to create a scene, and poutingly, I went to the machine and started playing five card poker with a full compliment of 5 quarters. An Ace of Spades came up with a king, Queen and Ten. I discarded one card, and a Royal Flush was the result. Well, the facility needed to get me \$650, and I am sure the Restaurant, Bar and service station had their cash assembled to pay me off. So, to be successful at VLTs, one needs to be not talking to your partner as a precursor to winning.

Well, the place was under renovation and so we drove East along the service road to the Blue-Sky Casino as the “only place open for lunch” as Marilyn remarked. The lunch was very good, but Marilyn stayed back while I went to have a nap before our last portion of our trip to Langham, Sk.

We were on the road again with the Sun to the left of us now as we headed North. We crossed the South



Saskatchewan River at the headwaters of Diefenbaker Lake which are also the head waters for Outlook Dam, at Saskatchewan Landing near Goodwin House. The Lake supports irrigation, recreation as well as much needed Hydro Power for Saskatchewan. Gardiner Dam near



Outlook, Saskatchewan, is designed with vertical intake spillways that support turbines. The vertical spillway permits sediment settlement at the bases. The design of this power source was part of our laboratory projects while studying my Civil Engineering courses prior to its actual construction.

All these sites become part of my excitement for travelling in Saskatchewan now that they are successful operating engineering projects. My thoughts continue to be entertaining!

Highway 4 has a junction to Highway 7 West at Rosetown and on into Saskatoon.

Entering Saskatoon from the South requires some knowledge of the highway system so that a bypass to Highway 16 West, upon which Langham is located is much easier. A left lane turn from Highway 7 to Highway 14 West to Asquith is required and then watch for a direction sign to Langham that will quickly direct you to Dalmeny Road heading North to Highway 16. Turn West on Highway 16 and about 30 kilometers later, we are in Langham which is located on the North side of Highway 16 that continues to Edmonton.

Our destination was the home of our long-term friends Michael and Dorothy Ozeroff in Langham. Dorothy lives alone now that Michael has passed away. Over the past 58 years, our two families have taken trips together, visited each other’s homes many times and so we have a genuine friendship where we feel

very comfortable together. It was decided prior to our trip that we would use Dorothy's house as a "base camp" for

the Langham / Saskatoon portion of our trip. It was much easier on everybody. Toiletries and baggage do not need to be moved from place to place.

Our first visitation was down "memory lane" to Pakrowka Cemetery where much of Marilyn's family is buried. This identity sign was welded by Marilyn's father, Alex J. Verishine. There were three (3) original Doukhobor Villages established in the Langham area. Pakrowka was immediately East of this cemetery and was used by the original settlers and their descendants since.



We visited Kirilowka Cemetery where Marilyn's grandparents and most of the Verishine family is buried. The original Kirilowka Village was East of Pakrowka. The new Highway 16 was redirected South to bypass the original Village and the Cemetery was directly adjacent to the Highway on the South side. Again, the identity frame was constructed by Alex J. Verishine.



Marilyn is standing by her uncle Harry J. Verishine's grave.

Our visit was predicated on the scheduled Celebration of Life (CoL) for Marilyn's Aunt Ann (nee Dergousoff) and her 1st Cousin Kathleen Verishine that had been set jointly, for June 24, 2023, at Langham, Saskatchewan. There was a close bond between the two Verishine brothers (Alex and Harry) who had farmed together for many years. Marilyn had



babysat her three (3) cousins (Julia, Leonard, and Harvey) on many occasions as well as visited them. Her Aunty was like a mentor to Marilyn.

Marilyn was in touch with her cousin Julia. We visited with her and husband John Steele. Julia is a Lawyer by profession and John has a PhD in Alloys as an extension of his Engineering Degree. John works for the National Research Council and was continuing his work and responsibilities at the Verishine family house in Langham. It was great to become informed on their lives in the Ottawa area. We were apprised on preparations for the upcoming CoL and that all was arranged as planned by the immediate family.



We decided to go into Saskatoon and try to achieve some visiting, shopping and reacquaint ourselves with the city where Marilyn was born, and I had spent my university years. Dorothy went with us as she



wanted show us the new Doukhobor Bread Booth that was constructed in 2022 at the Exhibition Grounds. It had been a great change for the Saskatoon Doukhobor Society (SDS) from their humble beginnings in 1955. A new building was constructed by the Exhibition to adhere to the applicable modern Building and Culinary codes. The original brick construction of three (3) ovens that can bake 100 loaves at a time (33 per oven), were carefully moved into the new building.

The average daily output can be 700 hundred loaves. The total Exhibition output for the 6 days is between 3,600 to 4,200 loaves.



The sale price (as posted in 2022) was \$14.00 per loaf and \$6.00 per slice of bread with jam. The jam used is strawberry and real butter is used first on each bread slice.

The Saskatoon Doukhobor Society (SDS) pays a percentage of their revenues to the Exhibition as a total rent that includes all operating expenses associated with the Bread Booth. The net proceeds after ingredients and labor, are used for the operation and other activities of the SDS.



This is the directional sign at the Exhibition that directs people to the booth.

We had prearranged a lunch with Dr. Veronica Markova who is a Linguistic Russian Professor at the University of Saskatchewan. Veronica has become a member of the SDS and participates with them. We had met her at previous SDS functions. She had visited us in Castlegar for several days while conducting research on current Doukhobor life.



Here we are with Elmer on the left followed by Marilyn and Dorothy Ozeroff with Veronica on the extreme right. Veronica shared her recent experience to return her mother's ashes to the family burial plot near St. Petersburg, Russia. She was excited to share that she now has a "significant other" in her life.

We had planned to continue our "Saskatoon Experience" by visiting Sonia Tarasoff, my long-time friend from Pelly and wife of my deceased university roommate and best friend Keith as well as permit Marilyn to "shop" in Saskatoon but Marilyn needed to rest after our travelling and visiting already conducted that day. Reluctantly we returned to Dorothy's for an afternoon nap.

Since we had originally started visiting the Ozeroff farm before Michael and Dorothy moved to Langham, we decide to all visit the farm as their son Darrell and Christina continue,

improving the original fourth generation farmstead with their son Tyson. Here Dorothy is on the left with Marilyn on the right and grain bins in the background.



Darrell confirms that he is farming 6,000 acres or just about 10 square miles of various crops. Farming has changed a great deal as Darrell explained. No grain can be held over for seed the following year. All must be purchased from a company such as Monsanto who treats the grains for disease and insects. This year (2023), a new disease, Canola Flea needed to have an additional chemical sprayed over the Canola. This was followed by an insect infestation from Grasshoppers. The farmer never seems to be free from weather and infestation challenges that will affect his ability to make a profit.



We visited with Jeff and Tracey Verishine at the original home



place where Marilyn had spent her early years growing up.

Jeff is the eldest son of Marilyn's brother Allan.

They developed a new home away from the original farm buildings. Jeff is soon to retire



from his Gas-fitting job, 'troubleshooting' around the province. Tracey still operates Class A Auctions in Saskatoon. I will never forgive Tracey for trying to "pawn off" imitation boiled eggs on me one morning.

Jeff has been landscaping his entire yard as "homework" project. It looks very good!

We also visited Jade and Marni with their son Jake. Jade is Jeff's second bother.

Jake and Marni have their farm just across the road and directly North of Jeff and Tracy. Jade has been working at Ft. McMurray in the winters and a neighbouring Kasahoff farm during the summer. He has purchased cattle and is starting a herd on his farm which he plans to expand into a self-sustaining operation in due course.



The Verishine CoL was well attended by immediate family and friends.



Here, Marilyn and I share a photo with Connie Verishine, Leonard's wife.

Marilyn had taught school in Perdue where Alex Posnikoff was a principal. Marlene's mother was a sister to Eli popoff of Grand Forks. As children Marlene visited her Aunt Ann at



the Verishine farm where Marilyn and her had great times together.



This is a photo of the Leonard (the eldest son of Harry and Ann) Verishine family a few years ago when Billy travelled from Australia to Langham. Billy and his family were not able to attend the CoL.

Leonard's family photo L to R:

Dawn (daughter), Leonard, Connie, Krista (holding Savina) and son Billy.

This is a photo of Harvey (the second son of Harry and Ann) Verishine family.

Here they are from L to R;

Lance Verishine: Diane and Harvey Verishine.



We attended Peter's Day Celebrations at the Saskatoon Doukhobor prayer Home on Sunday, June 25, 2023. This is a partial scene at the Hall.



We met many people there we had not seen for a long time. This building is where Marilyn and I met in the Fall of 1958 when I came to participate with the Saskatoon Doukhobor Youth (SDY). This place is special to us. We saw Olive (nee Kalmakoff), Veronica Markova, Mae Popoff, Sonia (nee Konkin) Tarasoff, Bill Kalmakoff, Jonathan Kalmakoff and his daughter (she received a scholarship from the SDS), Donna (nee Tarasoff) Hunchak, and many other friends again. It was great to sing with our former SDY again.

Donna Hunchak, sister to Keith Tarasoff, my university roommate, arranged a coffee visit with her eldest sister Ruth Sirota. We had all lived in a new house on Avenue H with Keith's older sister Ruth and her husband John Sirota and the parents Bill and Ruth Tarasoff. Donna led us to their house where we had a wonderful coffee party.



L to R;

John Sirota; Donna Hunchak, Marilyn and Elmer Verigin and Ruth Sirota.

We continued our marathon Sunday to visit Marilyn's first cousins Elaine and Donna. We needed to cross Saskatoon from NE to SW and chose to photograph this street sign. At one time Avenue P was adjacent to a barbwire fence where cattle had grazed on the West boundary of Saskatoon. Tarasoffs lived in a house that was on the corner of Avenue H and Rusholme. Many a time our gang would be returning from the bar, and some would say "let's go to 'Rush Home and Pee". We were able to urinate through the



barbwire fence in 1962. In 2023, that location is about halfway to the Western boundary of Saskatoon.

We then had some difficulty finding the Henderson house where our dinner appointment was to take place.



L to R:

Alex Derkachenko; Larry Henderson; Donna (nee Maloff, Marilyn's 1st cousin) Henderson; Elaine (Maloff, Marilyn's 1st cousin) Derkachenko and Marilyn.

Marilyn and I served as best man and bridesmaid for Alex and Elaine's wedding in 1961.

Back to Dorthy's for the night.

This ends Part I our 2023 trip on Sunday evening June 25, 2023. Part II follows starting June 26, 2023, as we leave for Benito Manitoba.

This article has received several edits prior to posting on my blog August 01, 2023 by

Elmer Verigin