

Helen Novokshonoff



Helen Novokshonoff was born in Kamsack, Saskatchewan July 2, 1919, to Peter and Lucy Demenoff. Helen's two older brothers, Peter and Philip were born earlier in Ootischenia, BC. When Helen was only one and a half years old, her father passed away in the spring of 1921 and her mother then raised her two sons and infant daughter by herself. They continued living in Kamsack, Saskatchewan where Helen went to primary school for a few years.

In 1927, when Peter Chistiakov arrived in Canada, the family moved back to BC. Initially they moved to a farmer's ranch and then in the fall, they settled on CCUB lands in Grand Forks, in Christovoye village or Outlook, what at that time was nicknamed "Winnipeg".

In 1936, Helen's mother, Lucy and her three children, moved to Gilpin, where they were raised. As a teenager, Helen used to work as a maid, in Grand Forks for Mrs. Fox, who also owned the Fox Theatre. Helen used to go to the movies and that is where she met Mike Novokshonoff and they were married on December 23, 1939. Their first child, daughter Vera was born to them and ten years later, their son Paul was born. Together they raised their family in a two story home in Grand Forks by the Kettle River, living for many years in a communal setting, together with her in-laws and other Novokshonoff relatives.

Both Helen and her husband were very talented. He sang bass and she sang soprano in groups and they also used to sing together. Helen used to joke that her husband married her because of her voice. The Grand Forks Men's Choir was organized in the early 40's and Helen, along with the other wives joined the group when it became a mixed choir. Throughout their whole life, Helen participated in the Brotherhood or Starshiy Choir as it was called at that time. They went on many choir trips, spreading the Doukhorbor message of love and brotherhood through song. They travelled to parts of Canada, Alberta, Saskatchewan as well as to Montreal with the Expo Choir in 1967. They also went to parts of the United States and California, especially to the Molokan community. In 1966

both Helen and Mike travelled with a group organized by John J. Verigin Sr. to Russia and Europe where a memorial plaque was placed at the site of the Burning of Arms in Bogdanovka, Georgia.

In Grand Forks, in her family home, Helen cared for everyone that was part of her family, looking after her in-laws, grandmother - Nastia, great aunt and uncle, Dunia and Prokofey Padmoroff, as well as father-in-law Misha Novokshonoff, right until each of them passed away. Through the years, she made many treasured friendships and since her immediate family lived quite a distance away from her, her circle of close friends became her family and cared for her as she aged. After her husband, Mike passed away in 1986, Helen was left in their family home with her brother-in-law. She continued to live in the two-story home right until her brother-in-law Bill's passing. At that time, she sold the home and moved into her trailer on North Fork road, still close to her familiar surroundings, friends and relatives.

Helen was a life-long dedicated USCC member and used to volunteer in the cooking groups and participate in many activities of the Doukhorbor community, loving every moment.

Helen's immediate family was spread out in different parts of British Columbia as well as in Europe. They would often come to visit from Castlegar, Vancouver, Kelowna and from overseas. When her grandson Robert & his wife Marja lived in Finland, she traveled twice to visit the family and care for her great grandsons, Kristian and Patrik and as they were born. The second time she flew to Helsinki, about 13 years ago, upon returning, she suffered a heart attack, but because of the good care by her doctors, nurses as well as her nieces and friends in Grand Forks, she survived and continued living in her warm and inviting trailer, welcoming friends and family.

Helen continued being independent, growing a small garden, smiling and welcoming all to her home, happily

making blini, pyrahi, soup, borshch, fruit tarts and socializing, driving her Pontiac Lemans, attending Doukhorbor functions and going on social outings. As time passed, many of her close and dear friends and relatives passed on and her own health started failing. In 2007, when it became difficult for her to look after herself and be independent, her family decided to move her to Castlegar when her daughter Vera lived. At first she resided in Rosewood Manor, but when she suffered another heart attack, and became weak, she was accepted into the Castlevue Care Centre. Helen loved the care at the place and appreciated all who visited her. At first she played bingo, went for short walks and engaged in their activities.

This summer, when she became weaker and her memory started to fail her, she kept asking when her family would come to visit because she really wanted to meet her new great grand daughter. In July and August her grand daughter, Maya came with Dave and Bella and Helen met the newest family addition. Later great grandson Markus and grandsons Robert and Jack were able to come as well and she had a wonderful, memorable visit with them.

Helen's health failed and she passed away peacefully October the 22, 2011 at 92 years of age at the Castlevue care facility with her children, grandchildren and great grandchild at her side.

Helen was predeceased by her husband, Mike in 1986, her brothers, Philip and Peter, her parents, her in-laws, and many other relatives and friends. She will be dearly remembered by her daughter, Vera and Walter Kanigan of

Ootischenia, her son, Paul in North Vancouver, her grandsons, Jack of Vancouver, Robert and Marja as well as great grandsons, Kristian, Patrik & Markus of Oakville Ontario, her grand daughter, Maya and Dave Mossman as well as great grand daughter, Bella of Vancouver and all of her friends and relatives.

We, the family of Helen Novokshonoff, greatly appreciate all of the help and support that we received during our time of need and wish to express our heartfelt gratitude to all of our family, relatives and friends for their love. Our sincere thanks to Mom's dear friend Laura Verigin for her words of comfort and presence during Mom's last days. Thank you to everyone for coming to the service at the USCC Grand Forks Community Centre: Psalmists, friends and relatives from near and far, Jerry Seminoff for his services and guidance as the officiant, all who spoke and sang, and thanks to our host family, Kay and Alex McKee, Marcie and Aunt Liz for making us feel so welcome. We also thank our friends and relatives that made contributions to ISKRA in Mom's memory, as well as for other expenses.

We would like to thank the Grand Forks cooks for a well prepared meal, those who phoned, came to the house and brought food, the pallbearers, Sion cemetery gravediggers and Sarah Greenwood of the Castlegar Funeral Chapel for their kind and professional service and guidance.

May Helen, our mom, grandmother, great grandmother, rest in peace in God's Heavenly Kingdom. We love you dearly and will always treasure the wonderful memories you left us.



In Memoriam
Vechnaya Pamyat

Preserving the memory of our deceased family members and friends