



## Peter P. Elasoﬀ 1920 - 2014

Peter P. Elasoﬀ was born on August 24, 1920, in Ootischenia, the eldest son of Peter and Annie Elasoﬀ (nee Nichovolodoff). In time a daughter Polly was born to the Elasoﬀ family who suffered a loss when Polly lived for only a couple of month and died in infancy.

Not long after, the Elasoﬀ family moved from Ootischenia to a small house they shared with another family on Granite Road on the outskirts of Nelson, BC. Some time after, Peter's brother Paul was born.

These were turbulent times in the Doukhobor midst and the Elasoﬀ family was in the thick of what was happening. They went to live closer to relatives in Glade until the community there felt that some people with different beliefs needed to be removed across the river. This involved the Elasoﬀ family who for a short time went to live in Thrums. Thrums at the time had a small population of core Sons of Freedom, the type that wore no leather, ate no eggs, milk or butter. They at that time were already practising what was to become, in our time, a way of life for some folks – being vegan.

These old core Sons of Freedom with their stories, their beliefs and way of life left quite an impression on young Peter Elasoﬀ.

It was from there that his family, involved in a small protest march, got arrested and locked up in the Nelson Jail. His mother was pregnant at the time. His father Pete Sr. was removed to Piers Island and young Peter along with younger brother Paul were relocated to the Industrial Reform School with several other Doukhobor children. Peter may have been the last of the Doukhobors who had been in the Industrial Reform Schools during that Piers Island episode.

Young Peter, only 12 years old, initiated his own struggle with the authorities. He refused to cut his hair, would not eat eggs, cheese, butter or milk. His health

deteriorated to the point where he was hospitalized in New Westminster, where he remained for nine months in a weakening condition. It was only after one of the Nurses or Matrons in charge there came to the Nelson jail and made an appeal to Peter's mother Annie to send Peter a letter to start eating - she wrote what she could and this prevailed. It was only after his mother's letter arrived that young Peter began to eat and started on his journey of recovery. As soon as he was a bit better, he was sent back to the Reform School until he was eventually released.

His mother Annie in the meantime had given birth - in Nelson jail - to another brother, Bill . She was later released and so was Peter in her care and so Annie Elasoﬀ, with father Pete still at Piers Island, moved alone with her three boys, to live with her sister and her husband and child, into a one room house in Sirdar, across Kootenay Lake. Such were the times.

After the release of father Pete, the family relocated to Porto Rico by Ymir where a small Doukhobor settlement had begun to form. At Porto Rico, Peter's sister Natasha was born. After a time the Elasoﬀs moved to Crescent Valley for a short period and eventually to Krestova, where the family finally established some roots.

Peter met Polly Konkin and they were married in 1945. A year later, daughter Irene was born. During this phase, Peter worked in logging camps – often as a First Aid Man - but eventually he turned to carpentry and was involved in several large projects throughout the province and worked at that trade until he retired.

Peter and Polly, along with other families, also experienced the pain of New Denver when their daughter Irene was taken from them for close to four years. Peter, still retaining his convictions and experiences from childhood, remained part of the

Sons of Freedom group and was involved in the negotiations with the government at the time to institute home school for a day or two a week with children to be attending regular schooling on other days. This of course failed because the government at that time was not interested so much in education as in trying to assimilate the younger generation of Doukhobors. That was the vanguard of the struggle where presently, home schooling is practiced effectively by many Doukhobors and non-Doukhobors, and the government is now finally supporting the parents' choice in this.

From his earlier actions of standing by his convictions, Peter was not one to back off, and thus remained in the foreground of the activities of the Sons of Freedom (later renamed the Reformed Doukhobors). Peter was an integral part of the Fraternal Council and as a result spent some time in jail. The Fraternal Council was later released when the case against them was thrown out of Court. His activities also included trips to Ottawa to the Soviet Embassy for negotiations regarding a long-held Doukhobor dream of returning to Mother Russia (The Soviet Union at that time).

The Elasoﬀ family, Peter, Polly and Irene were also part of the Great Trek to Hope-Vancouver and Agassiz in support of the men folk in jail in Agassiz. These included his younger brother Bill and other very close relatives and friends incarcerated there.

After some time, Peter and Polly returned back to Krestova. Daughter Irene remained at the Coast.

Peter and Polly lived for many years in Krestova. After a fifty year marriage, his wife Polly passed away in 1995. This created a significant change in Peter's life and sometime after, Peter and daughter Irene moved to Castlegar and lived there for about twelve years. Peter for many years took an active part in the daily A&W coffee group in Castlegar where numerous interesting and sometimes passionate discussions took place in trying to resolve some mysteries of Doukhobor history.

Peter was an avid reader - mostly history and philosophy, books to make one think - and he would often provide thoughtful or clever remarks on history and current local and international news. In many minds, a singular issue continues to be one of the great

Canadian mysteries - who murdered Peter Lordly Verigin? This concern and seeking an answer was an enduring question that Peter Elasoﬀ pursued until his last days. He was a seeker of truth and knowledge and would often point out the funny side of things when everyone else was far too serious. He was a fun loving and very kind man with a witty and dry sense of humour.

He had many friends and was a remarkably active and mobile individual. He would visit both younger and older friends and acquaintances either at their homes or in old folks homes in Castlegar, Nelson and New Denver and Trail on a regular basis. For many years he was an active member of KRUNA, the Kootenay Regional United Nations Association.

Peter also developed a very close, devoted and loving relationship with Florence Verigin and her daughter Rosemary. Even as old age crept up on him and he was no longer able to drive, he would coax Irene or someone else to drive him to his visits with Florence.

Florence was ultimately required to be in a Care Home and Peter would visit her there in Nelson until her passing. This was another significant experience for Peter and his health also began to decline to the point where he too was required to be cared for. A room was found for him at Talarico Place in Castlegar. He very much enjoyed being taken for outings by Irene, sister Natasha and Rosemary, Florence's daughter. Peter lived at Talarico Place for about three years and almost to the end enjoyed relatively good health and retained a very keen and sharp mind.

Peter P. Elasoﬀ was pre-deceased by his father Pete, mother Annie, sister Polly, brother Paul, brother Bill, wife Polly and very dear friend Florence Verigin. He is survived by daughter Irene and sister Natasha Ostrikoﬀ and several nieces and nephews who adored him. Peter also had many life-long friends, most of whom have already passed on before him.

Peter P. Elasoﬀ, at 93 years of age, passed away peacefully in his sleep on Sunday morning, December 15, 2013.

May he rest in peace -Vechnaya Pamyat v Tsarstviyi Nebesnom.



**In Memoriam**  
Vechnaya Pamyat

Preserving the memory of our deceased family members and friends