



Anne J. Plotnikoff June 27, 1934 — October 2, 2016

Annie was born in Buchanan, Saskatchewan on June 27, 1934, to the Doukhobor family of John J. (Ivanovich) and Elizabeth (Vasilyevna - nee Soloveoff) Rilkoff. She had two older siblings: brother Timothy, born in 1925 and sister Dorothy, born in 1927. None of the three Rilkoff siblings were given second names but were registered with their father's patronymic, as was the custom in Russian. Thus, in later years, among all her large extended family and numerous friends, Annie was affectionately known as "Annie John".

Shortly after she was born, the family moved back to Veregin, Saskatchewan, where Annie began her education at the Linden Valley country school. In 1941, the Rilkoffs joined scores of other Doukhobor families in a migration to British Columbia, which they reached in the spring of 1942, after wintering with Annie's maternal grandparents (Soloveoffs) in Kylemore, Saskatchewan. In BC they settled in Sunshine Valley near the town of Grand Forks, finding initial employment with local farmers.

Annie attended local public school where the teachers noted her academic aptitude and exceptional talents in art and literary composition. However, in spite of her own inner ambitions and insatiable desire to learn, Annie ended her formal education after completing grade eight, as it was customary in most Doukhobor families of that time for young people to enter the work force and contribute to the family's efforts to make a living.

In addition to helping with farm work, Annie worked at local retail outlets Overwaitea Foods and The Style Centre, where she was praised by her employers, but shortly her working career was rudely interrupted by an illness. Beginning in 1950, a tumour in her spine gradually paralyzed her and she lost the use of her legs. With a great deal of miraculous help from family, friends and community, she was taken to the world-famous Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, where exactly on her 17th birthday surgeons removed the tumour and with subsequent therapy she regained full use of her legs.

Raised by very devout and dedicated Doukhobor parents and grandparents, Annie was deeply involved in her heritage faith and culture from a very

young age. She received a few years of Russian language instruction and participated in Doukhobor youth activities, including various choirs, in which she was able to contribute with her natural singing ability. She also participated in the social life of the Doukhobor youth of the area, through which she soon met a charming young man named Cecil F. Plotnikoff. They were immediately attracted to each other and after a period of courtship, they were married on December 28, 1952.

Despite Annie's worries about possible effects of her medical treatments in Rochester, the young couple were blessed with their first child, Irene, in 1954, their second, Elizabeth, in 1956 and the youngest, Leona, in 1962. While Cecil made a living in the local forest and lumber industries, Annie was kept busy as a housewife and mother, raising their three daughters and a garden as well, with many enjoyable social occasions with a wide circle of relatives and friends, and community activities in between. Both life-long members of the USCC, Cecil and Annie were long-time members of the USCC Youth Choir, later known as the USCC Friendship Choir, and a special highlight for them was their participation in the Doukhobor EXPO 67 Choir, with which they travelled across Canada to Montreal in 1967. Annie also served on all of the various USCC Committees, such as the Ladies Organization, Sunday Schools and assisting with the USCC Union of Youth activities, which all three daughters took part in. A historic milestone role came her way in 1988, when she became one of the first two women to serve on the USCC Executive Committee in an elected capacity.

Although Annie was not able to continue her formal schooling, that did not stop her from expressing her natural born talents and these helped her to attain her High School Equivalency Certificate later in life. As well, from a young age she began to compose poetry in both languages, and over the years many of her poems were published in ISKRA, the Grand Forks Gazette and other local and regional publications, receiving many accolades from her growing circle of fans. In 2004, a long-time dream was attained when over 120 of her English language poems were published in a book, titled "With Each Bend in the Road", which quickly became the

bestselling poetry book ever published by a member of the Doukhobor community.

In the late 1980s, local publisher W.G. Burnham invited Annie to write a weekly column in his Boundary Community News, which was a popular feature in that newspaper for some years. Later, Annie wrote an occasional column for ISKRA, titled "A View from Annie's Window".

Annie's literary skills were also expressed in her creation of several dramatic productions on Doukhobor themes. Foremost among these was "The Story of the Doukhobors", a Historical Pageant for which she wrote the script and produced and directed the stage presentation at various venues across Western Canada as part of the Russian-Canadian Heritage Festival in 1987. Another major creative effort went into the "Voices for Peace" International Tour for which Annie also wrote the script and served as the Drama Director. This Tour, which was organized as part of the 1995 Doukhobor Centenary of the Burning of Arms, performed its program at 16 venues across Canada, in New York City and several locations in Russia. Cecil and Annie both participated in the historic tour and were especially thrilled to be able to visit the land of their ancestors.

With her family grown and settled, Annie quenched some of her continuing thirst for learning new things by taking a real estate course, after which she worked in that field for several years, very much enjoying this final career experience. In retirement, she joined the local branch of the Red Hat Society and Cecil and Annie also enjoyed many memorable travel experiences, across Canada and abroad. But the greatest joy of their lives was always their family, which just kept getting bigger and bigger, until in recent years, Cecil and Annie proudly stood at the apex of an amazing pyramid of children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, as well as numerous other extended family members, all of whom liked nothing better than to share in the many joyous family gatherings, in which Cecil and Annie's warm and generous hospitality and full-spirited joy of living set the tone for an ever-memorable time.

Annie experienced some health issues in recent years, but even after receiving a terminal diagnosis some months ago, she expressed gratitude for the blessings of her life and continued to live in her own home with her beloved husband of nearly 64 years. After a few days in Grand Forks Hospital, Annie passed away there in the presence of her loving family, on Sunday morning, October 2, 2016. She was 82 years of age.

Annie was predeceased by her parents and in-law parents, as well as her brother Timothy and all of her husband's siblings. She will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered by husband Cecil; children: Paul and Irene Koodrin, John and Elizabeth Hole, Cecil and Leona Chutskoff; grandchildren: Jennifer (Jeff) Odorizzi, Matthew (Stephanie) Lebedoff, Alison (Ron) Shaw, Kyle Chutskoff and Bryce Chutskoff; great grandchildren: Shiloh, Eila, Nicolas, Nathan and Jake; blended grandchildren: Greg and Stefani Koodrin; and blended great grandchildren: Kyle and Jenna Odorizzi; also her sister Dorothy Popoff, sister-in-law Helen Plotnikoff, and numerous nephews, nieces and other relatives, and many friends.

We all wish our dear "Annie John" eternal peace in God's Heavenly Kingdom. Vechnaya Pamyat! Your beautiful spirit will remain in our hearts forever.

The Funeral Service was held at the USCC Centre on October 7th and 8th, with interment at the Sion Cemetery.

Our family would like to extend a heart felt thank you to all our family, friends, neighbours, from near and far, for the food, love, prayers, flowers, phone calls and emails; to the USCC staff and volunteer grave diggers, and Ladies Committee for the wonderful meal; Larry Jmaiff for his gentle guidance of the service; all the people that came out to support us, and the singers that sang our mama home. Thank you to the Grand Forks Funeral Home - Debra Baker, for her loving support. Thank you to the Hospital staff, nurses and doctors and Home Support for taking such good care of mom.

In Memoriam

Vechnaya Pamyat

Preserving the memory of our deceased family members and friends