



George Swetlishoff 1945 - 2013

George G Swetlishoff (Dad) was born in Gilpin, BC on March 8, 1945 to parents George F and Ann Swetlishoff (nee Podmoroff). He was the oldest brother to Mac and Paul.

He treasured his childhood memories of idyllic times spent with his grandparents, especially sitting on his grandmother Martha's brother, Gregory Kanigan's knee, combing his beard while listening to him tell stories. Dad did not adjust well to the world changing around him – the more “modern” it got the more he longed for the good old days.

His only formal schooling was as a child, during his three plus years in the New Denver Dormitory. In his late teens he and several other boys spent a year at the Brannen Lake Correctional Facility, due to shenanigans resulting from wanting to fit in, after which he joined his family who was taking part in the Trek between 1962 and 1972.

He spent some time working with his Dad in the orchards in the Okanagan and in construction in Agassiz and surrounding area before settling with his family in the New Settlement in the Krestova area in 1972.

In amongst those years, George (Dad) married (my mom), Kathleen Makortoff (nee Shlakoff), on July 8, 1967. They had one daughter.

George and Kathleen (Dad and Mom) unfortunately did not stay married long however they continued to maintain an amicable relationship over the years for the sake of their daughter, for this I will remain eternally grateful. Their wonderful example has helped to shape the person I have become.

George (Dad) continued to work as a carpenter in construction with his father and both his brothers for more than 35 years throughout the Kootenay area.

He had a very strong work ethic and insisted on quality workmanship. Even when his family work mates felt the job was done satisfactorily, he at times persisted that they put in extra effort, adding more braces, extra glue or nails to ensure the project met his standards.

George (Dad) was a pioneer of all outdoor activities, teaching his friends, brothers, cousins, daughter, nieces and even my siblings, Leesa and Nicholas to ski downhill and cross-country, skate, or play golf. He also took the time going to ski-swaps and used sporting goods stores making sure everyone had the necessary equipment, often at his own expense.

As you'd expect of boys, the Swetlishoff brothers shared an interest in motorcycles and car racing. Excursions to Northport and Spokane, Washington were a common pastime to attend Stock Car and Drag races. He spent many hours tinkering as a backyard mechanic and “Camperizing” several vans.

Back when I was a teenager, he was always more than willing to load up his car with my friends and drive us to our destination of the day - town to the movies, out for dinner, or a travelling carnival. The only requirement was that we wash and wax his car before we go.

He was very adventurous and loved nature; many summer weekends were spent travelling to the Okanagan or the States. Staying at a campsite, camping in a tent by campfire is where I learned to truly appreciate the outdoors.

Dad was quiet and sensitive. He was very loving and kind to animals; he never refused to babysit my pets over the years. In fact when I moved to Grand Forks three years ago, my longtime cats Buttons and Pebbles stayed with him in Krestova. He became so close to

them that he sensed their upcoming passing in time to give me a chance to say good-bye.

He loved country music; often saying “If it ain’t country, it ain’t music” with the exception of Elvis who was “the King” of rock and roll. Seeing Elvis live in concert was unfortunately an unfilled dream of his.

Many years spent working in inclement weather took their toll on his body and George (Dad) suffered with an overuse injury in his shoulder which left him unable to carry on his usual physical activities such as work and skiing. This was a difficult adjustment for him.

He took his interest in trains and turned it into a full out obsession. He called himself a “railway nut”. I worried a bit about this nut until I discovered there were other nuts out there. He would often follow the trains to various routes in his little Chevrolet, fully equipped with sleeping quarters, camera, scanner, and notepad to gather every little detail he could about them (he actually removed his passenger seat and laid some plywood in its place to make a bed). All this information he eagerly shared with, admittedly, sometimes not so eager relatives. His keen interest and unflinching persistence offered him the occasional ride by an accommodating conductor.

He was a down-to-earth, kind-hearted, compassionate, generous man who tried to live his life according to his Doukhobor understanding. Despite being very shy in public settings, he stepped up to the occasional obligatory social engagement because of his love for and loyalty to his family. He spent all of his time with his brothers, daughter and nieces.

Over the years Dad was always there to help me when I needed. I cannot even count the times he helped move me back and forth to Vancouver. I recall a response to his brothers comment “Why do you always have to go help?” He answered “When you’re a parent you’ll know.” I could always count on Dad for anything.

His passing has shaken me more than I could have imagined. Parents truly are your first direct link to unconditional love. And although as an adult, I know in my heart that a part of his soul will be with me forever, a part of me remains a child and physically feels the tearing away of a pillar of support.

He was predeceased by his grandparents, Fred and Martha Swetlishoff and Pete and Ann Podmoroff; and

his parents – his Dad in 1996 and his Mom in 2002. After his father’s passing he helped care for his mother till her final days.

Due to an ongoing heart condition and resulting inability to maintain his family’s residence, he chose to move from his little shack where he lived in his parent’s yard and generously allow his niece and her partner to take over the family dwelling. He lived in and took care of his daughter’s home in Krestova for the last three years until his passing. Dad dreaded the thought of living in a retirement facility in town, so I was very glad to be able to help him live out his life in the New Settlement after all he had done for me over the years.

At times we did not have the same viewpoint on things however, we accepted and loved each other unconditionally and learned to support one another despite any differences. I respected him for always being true to himself.

He is survived by his only child, daughter Stephanie and her husband, Barry Verigin of Grand Forks; his brother Paul; his brother Mac and wife Linda, their two daughters, Marcie and her partner Weniamin (Benny) Lazarescu, all of Krestova and Dasha and her partner Milosh (Gary) Lakovic of Kelowna.

We will all miss his gentle presence and uncomplicated outlook on life, but will continue to treasure our many memories of Dad, (Гринчик), Дя Дя George, Папа George, Дедя George, Дудя, and Пека.

Whenever I’d let him know of someone’s passing he would always comment “Отмучился” (done their time) and now Dad, so have you. We trust that you are free of all pain or worry and that you are happily reunited with your loved ones awaiting you in heaven. Fly free and far knowing that our love will unquestionably fill the space between us. Please know we will keep you forever in our hearts.

May God hold you safely in His loving arms until we meet again.

Вечная память в Царствии Небесном.

The family of George Swetlishoff would like to acknowledge and thank everyone for all the love, kindness and support they have shown during this difficult time: coroner, Diana Gonzalez and Funeral Directors, Bill Strelaeff and Sarah Greenwood

(Castlegar Funeral Home) for their compassionate care and professional service; Dr Andre Piver – we were comforted to know that Dad was in good hands; Harry Zeabin for the casket and for officiating the service; Leonard Balchewski and the grave diggers for preparing Dad’s final resting place; the pallbearers (his family); the psalmists from Krestova, Brilliant and Grand Forks for their beautiful singing; the Babakaeff sisters for their heart touching song; Ira Relkoff for translating and reading the biography in Russian and for singing “Forget Me Never”; JJ Verigin for his kind words; Auntie Nellie Babakaeff for organizing the meal and for assisting with the *порядок* (funeral service); Grand Forks Bread Ladies for sharing loaves of their wonderful homemade bread; Mary Makortoff,

Laverne Semenoff and Nina Decaire for offering to make the *lapsha* in Grand Forks; all the wonderful ladies who generously volunteered to prepare and serve the meal; everyone who stayed to help the family clean up; Auntie “Jo” – you are the glue that holds the Swetlishoff family together; Bill Barisoff and Florence Kinakin for sharing their memories of Dad; Benny for reading a poem; all who attended the service and all who donated in Dad’s memory and brought food, sent cards and emailed messages of condolence; our family and friends from out of town and our Doukhobor community for coming together to remember Dad’s life and to help say farewell as his soul returns home. This journey has been overwhelming – from the bottom of our hearts thank you for your help.



In Memoriam Vechnaya Pamyat

Preserving the memory of our deceased family members and friends