



REMEMBERING **Elfrieda Toews**

January 14, 1934 - February 28, 2021



Elfrieda (nee Krause) Toews was born Jan 14, 1934 to Albert and Anna Krause in Tarutino, Bassarabia near the Black Sea in Romania where her family, of German-descent, had farmed for generations.

In 1939 her family was forced to flee by horse-drawn wagon through southern Germany and Poland. Their flight included a 6-week period where Elfrieda (aged 6) and her younger siblings were separated from their parents, quarantined in the care of the Red Cross because two of them had whooping cough. After finding each other again, the family settled in northern Germany for a time. In 1948, they made their way to Canada beginning a new life in Chilliwack, BC. After just one year in school, at the young age of 15, Elfrieda began work as a live-in housekeeper and cook. She moved several times during the 12 years with her employer, enjoying life in Chilliwack, West Kelowna and West Vancouver, actively involved in church in each place. During this time, she developed her keen sense of proper etiquette and hospitality and perfect English with no hint of an accent. With a strong independent spirit, encouraged particularly by her father, she learned how to drive car and saved her money and bought investment rental properties while still in her 20's. She met her husband, John Toews, while working at Wilmer's Bakery. His love of jelly doughnuts brought him in but maybe someone else kept him coming back? They were married in 1964 and settled in Abbotsford where they began fellowship at the Clearbrook MB Church. Daughter Ruth was born in 1966 followed by their son Robert in 1969. Shortly after that, they began attending Bakerview MB Church where Elfrieda poured herself into teaching Sunday School and Pioneer Girls. Her dedication in lesson preparation and her joy in creative crafts were evident to all.

As a stay-at-home Mom, Elfrieda was well known for her cooking, baking and generous hospitality as well as her great skill in decorating birthday cakes. She also

spent countless hours in her vegetable and flower gardens often working outside on summer nights until it was pitch dark. In 1991, a planned trip to Europe to meet up with her daughter to visit relatives and places from her past was cancelled because of a mouth cancer diagnosis. John was by that time retired and a volunteer driver for the Cancer Society. He drove Elfrieda to Vancouver for weeks of radiation treatments which were successful in eliminating the cancer.

In 1998, Elfrieda became a grandmother. She spent countless precious hours with Sydney, picking her up from school every day all those years. They read many books, did many crafts and enjoyed walks to the park together in the afternoons.

After John had a stroke in 2003, they down-sized to a townhouse where she faithfully cared for him until his passing in 2007. She was especially close to some of her neighbours there and enjoyed working out front in her flower garden where she could visit with them as they walked past to the mailboxes.

Damage to her jawbone from radiation 20 years earlier required extensive surgery over a period of years. This, along with another bout of cancer in 2016, this time lymphoma requiring chemotherapy, had a significant impact on her overall health and energy. So in 2017 it was time for her to down-size again and she made the move to Independent Living at Menno Place. These were very good years for her. She often remarked that she hoped she could stay there and not have to move. She enjoyed many of the daily and weekly activities offered and socializing at lunch and in the bistro. It was a joy to see her so content and flourishing.

In 2020, COVID restrictions eliminated all the activities in which she loved to participate, and her world grew very small with only her two children allowed to come for occasional visits to her one-bedroom apartment. After a surprise diagnosis of COVID and a short hospital stay, Elfrieda passed from death into life eternal on February 28, 2021 at the age of 87.

Predeceased by an infant sister, her father and mother, her brother Erwin and sister Helga Tonn as well as her husband, John, Elfrieda is survived by her daughter Ruth (Darcy) Ross, son Robert (Heather) Toews and granddaughter Sydney Toews as well as sister-in-law Lorraine Krause and many nieces and nephews.

The immediate family will celebrate a graveside service at Little Mountain Cemetery in Chilliwack on March 15, 2021.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Mennonite Benevolent Society (Menno Place) as a contribution to the ongoing provision of the nurturing, caring community which Elfrieda enjoyed.

