



## REMEMBERING Elsie Redekop

April 1, 1937 - February 7, 2021



Elsie Wall was born on April 1st, 1937 in Wernersdorf, a Mennonite village located in Ukraine near the Dnieper River. She was the oldest of three children of John and Mary Wall. Ernie was born in 1938 (sadly passing away at nine months) and then of course Elly, who was born in 1941. Elsie's first eleven years alone were eventful enough to fill the pages of an entire biography. Elsie was a happy, always smiling little girl who would love to visit her Aunt Sue in the village store. Receiving some candy was a highlight and she was always eager to share, even if it meant at times leaving little for herself. Elsie lived in her Grandparents' big brick house nestled in the abundance of grain fields. Her Dad's brother, Uncle Frank, a veterinarian, lived at the other end of town. During the latter part of the war, the Germans were in retreat and they took the German-speaking Mennonites with them. A frightened eight-year old Elsie and her sister Elly joined their Oma Wall on a train bound for Poland while adults from the village (including their parents) headed in the same direction in a caravan, with livestock pulling the wagons. During this time, Elsie and Elly's father was conscripted into the German army. John and his brother Frank ultimately survived the war years but Elsie's Uncles Gerhard (1938), Abe (1941), and Peter (1945) did not. Poland was but one of three stops over the next several months before the family found refuge with four other families in an apartment in Adendorf, located on the outskirts of Luneburg, 150 miles west of Berlin. Elsie would never forget this arduous journey; even recently, she vividly recounted the horrors of vicious Russian soldiers assaulting her Oma and other women during the "night of a full moon", as well as the sights and sounds of pencil shaped bombs landing too close to the train or wherever the Walls were stationed. Elsie came to resent perogies, because it seemed to her that every time they ate this meal, the bombing would be the most intense. When they arrived in Adendorf as the war was ending, Elsie and her family learned that her Dad was working nearby on a farm in Luneburg. Their tearful reunion was an incredible blessing during a time of so much heartbreak and loss. Elsie's father would save the meals he was given while working at the farm and bring them home to the children. Both of Elsie's parents - John, until his passing in 1968 and Mary, who cared so much for Elsie's grandchildren and who Elsie would call her best friend when she passed away in

1995 - always meant so much to Elsie. Another miraculous turning point in Elsie's life came about when her Aunt Sue successfully navigated a way for the Walls to escape the Russian occupied zone and enter the far more secure British zone. Many of Elsie's relatives would not be as fortunate. The most significant and traumatic event of Elsie's young life occurred during Spring 1947. She became extremely ill when her appendix ruptured. The hesitancy to contact a doctor (for fear of being sent back to Russia) until it was almost too late exacerbated her pain and condition. When the doctor arrived, he told Elsie's parents to "shut the door, she will likely be gone within an hour". Thankfully, a makeshift surgery was performed, followed by weeks of painful healing, and she pulled through. During this ordeal, Elsie experienced a supernatural encounter and remembered vividly the glorious warmth of being in the Heavenly realms. We are so grateful the Lord blessed her with 72 more years, albeit with emotional and physical scars. In 1948, at the age of eleven and clutching the only doll she ever owned, Elsie and her family (including Uncle Frank and Aunt Sue) boarded the Cargo of Hope, bound for Halifax, alongside 700 other refugees. Elsie's two lasting memories of this voyage were: (1) the seasickness endured by several passengers (somewhat alleviated by Uncle Frank bringing the girls down to the cool area where he was cutting meat as a crewmember); and (2) enjoying ice cream for the first time. When the Walls arrived in Halifax, they boarded a train and headed West. During the trip, Elsie peered out the window countless times and marveled at the vast openness and desolation that was Canada in 1948, a stark contrast to the density of Europe. "Where are we being left off?" Elsie recounted years later. The Walls arrived in Mission and were promptly picked up by Mr. Goertz (Elsie's Mom's brother) in his 1948 Yellow Studebaker. Elsie's family initially settled just west of Bethel Mennonite Church in a shed-like building. The structure burned to the ground one night within the first year, and the Walls soon built a home at 52nd Avenue and 248th in Aldergrove. Because Elsie only spoke fluent German as an eleven-year old, she had to begin school again in Canada as a tall Grade One student. She quickly caught up to her peers as her English skills progressed. One fun memory she retained of her early years at school was on a Sports Day when she and Elly were each given 25 cents to spend on a hot dog and a coke. Their new friends, Lydia and George Hildebrand, had also recently arrived from Europe and Elsie and Elly were delighted to pool their cash so that all four could partake. Lydia soon became a special lifelong friend. Elsie blossomed into a vibrant social teenager and was blessed to establish several close lifelong friendships while in her youth. There were approximately 8 to 10 girls in the mix, and even as these ladies advanced well into their 70s, they would line up together for group photos, usually choreographed by Marie Schmidt. Many are now with the Lord, but one of Elsie's highlights from Christmas 2020 was receiving a beautiful note from Zelma (nee Martens), now living in Alberta. When she turned 17, Elsie became acquainted with a reserved yet distinguished gentleman, John Redekop. After confirming with Helen, one of John's sisters, that he was still single, Elsie agreed to a date, which fortunately for many of us, led to several more. They often remembered with zeal those exciting dating years which included fun double dates with Rudy and Erica and the New Westminster Royals. At the age of 18, Elsie found employment in downtown Vancouver with one of the large banks. She lived for a time with her Aunt Sue, who

movingly cared for Elsie as if she was one of her own. A year later, a number of friends from the valley who were also working downtown rented a large house near Fraser Street and Elsie joined them. John and Elsie were married on August 24, 1957. They then embarked upon their honeymoon to California to explore Disneyland and Knott's Berry Farm, with John at the helm navigating his two-tone blue '57 Meteor down Highway 99. This was the first of many trips that John and Elsie enjoyed over their 63 years together -sometimes with, sometimes without the boys - and a few of the most memorable destinations were the Maritimes, the Southeastern United States, and of course their favourite, Hawaii. Closer to home, there was Sooke, the quiet fishing refuge. Elsie gave birth to four sports-minded boys; the girls would have to arrive as grandchildren. Her dominant love language was certainly the one known as 'acts of service'. How else to describe the love she invested in ironing her sons' underwear? Perfectionism is an overused term but in Elsie's case, it certainly applied in the preparation of so many culinary treats such as chicken noodle soup, verenikys, borscht, platz, jams, and peaches, to name but a few. The house was spotless, and the living room was so immaculate it almost felt roped off like a museum exhibit. Her sense of aesthetics was one in a million. Once, during a Canucks hockey game, Elsie insisted to a skeptical John that the seats across the ice were wider than the ones they were sitting in. Dutifully, John measured them during the intermission and confirmed by an inch Elsie's suspicions. Elsie's favourite sport was undoubtedly shopping. She had a terrific sense of style and John still notes with admiration that there were no boys dressed more neatly for church - with matching outfits at times - than the Redekop boys. Of course, there were also some awkward times during which the teenage sons had to endure some mild humiliation as Elsie cross examined the fit of certain jeans in front of cute sales clerks at Bootlegger. Elsie loved people. Effortlessly, she seemingly committed everyone's birthdates to memory. Everyone in earshot of today's eulogy can rest assured that Elsie knew exactly when you were born. We guarantee it. Elsie was also a very sentimental person. Her favourite movie was easily The Sound of Music and she greatly enjoyed watching various real-life stories portrayed on TLC. She believed in the wonder of harmonious relationships. As many of you know, Elsie endured a great deal of discomfort throughout her life. The assortment of maladies is too numerous to mention during this reflection, but one blessing of this past week is that she is no longer combatting lingering pain. We can rejoice for Elsie in knowing that there is no pain in Heaven.

Elsie accepted Jesus Christ as her personal Savior and was baptized at Bethel Mennonite Church while in her late teens. Church and faith would play a major role during Elsie's time on earth. She quietly but fervently partnered with John as they accepted the important leadership role of Deacon couple while also balancing a busy farm and home life. John and Elsie loved attending Bethel Mennonite Church and this community of believers meant a great deal to them throughout their entire lives together. They prayed earnestly and consistently for their children and grandchildren and many others and were such an inspiration to so many for their disciplined commitment to the Lord, come rain or shine.

Elsie, we love you and thank you for everything you did and meant to us for so many years. May God eternally bless you.

