REMEMBERING

Kathe Goertzen (Kay)

December 6, 1925 - January 11, 2019

Kay (Kathe) Enns was born in Dalmeny, Saskatchewan, on December 6, 1925. Her mother was pregnant with her while coming to Canada from the Ukraine, sailing over the Atlantic on the liner S.S. Mennedosa, in September of that year. Kay was her mother's third pregnancy. Abram and John, Kay's two older brothers died within weeks of each other in the Ukraine earlier that year, likely from typhus. Her parents named her Katie. However, her father, not knowing more than a few words of English, registered her birth with his phonetic German spelling as K-a-t-h-e. She is Kathe (KATIE) on her birth certificate and her driver's license but she was really known only as Kay.

Shortly after Kay was born, the family moved south from Dalmeny to Beechy, about an hour and a half north of Swift Current, Saskatchewan. Even now, there are fewer than 500 people in Beechy but Kay grew up and finished school up to grade eight in the village. Not long after completing grade eight, Kay went to Winnipeg as a fifteen- year-old, to find work.

Newly arrived farm families from Russia/Ukraine were not spared the Great Depression of the 1930s. Families needed financial help and many young women, really just teenagers, left their homes, families and friends and travelled to the nearby cities to find employment. Being unskilled, these young girls mostly found work as house maids. In Winnipeg Kay worked at first cleaning houses during the day and lived in the Winnipeg Maedchenheim, a boarding house system established by Mennonite churches in the cities. Later, she worked as a live-in housemaid for families, cleaning homes and caring for children. Kay's meager earnings were almost entirely sent home.

In a break from her work in Winnipeg, Kay spent the winter of 1942-43 in Herbert Bible School, returning again to work in Winnipeg after that winter's hiatus. During

that time in Winnipeg, Kay's family moved from Beechy, Saskatchewan, to Abbotsford, British Columbia.

As a teenage girl, Kay's journals in these transitional times reflected a poetic appreciation for God's artistic hand, and a deep love of her heavenly Father, family, friendship, and home. As her family prepared to move from Beechy, she wrote nostalgically of "a blessed hour of prayer in the low valley near the well" and wrote eloquently how the farm "looked towards the south, the low flat all in green, and the black fields and the slanting hills away in the background…" She remembered her "daddy and his horses" and how it felt for him to pick her up from the field to bring her home. Her journal pages were filled with quiet reminiscences and beautifully articulated longings for treasured people, places, and times with God. Her writing drew the reader into peaceful natural gardens, pastoral vistas, worry-free meadows made by God simply to enjoy–to enjoy the truly valuable things of life. It was in these times and places where she wrote that her "character, desires and longing were formed…"She noted that "It was here that I was saved on July 19, 1939 and was baptized in the Saskatchewan River in August 2, 1942…" "Friends will change and leave me," she wrote, "but my dear Lord Jesus is a truer friend than any here on earth. He will not forsake or leave me." She finished the entry with a scripture from Psalm 86,Teach me thy way oh Lord, I will walk in thy truth, unite my heart to fear thy name…But thou Lord are a God full of compassion, gracious and long suffering and plenteous in mercy and truth."

Kay was born into a family experienced with sorrow and familiar with loss. How must have her parents prayed for her health, her survival, and her siblings after their loss in the Ukraine? How could they dare to hope for this family? Few can understand such a thing, but her parents most surely prayed deeply for life, for hope, for restoration. Their prayers were answered, and their hopes realized as the family grew to ten children and prospered in health and livelihood.Kay's appreciation for God's handiwork redoubled on the small acreage in Abbotsford. She was mesmerized by the mountains and throughout her life, could never resist commenting on spring flowers, a cloudless day, telling her kids to admire Mt. Baker, or to take a closer look at the fresh snow on Grouse Mountain. She never took God's artwork for granted nor would she let her children become complacent towards His beauty. She was an expert gardener, finding it nearly impossible to let any patch of soil go unplanted. George watched her productivity with pride, "You can take the girl from the farm, but you can't take the farm from the girl" he would say, on cue as the days grew longer each spring.George and Kay met in 1947 while in their second year at Briercrest Bible Institute. They held hands in the prairie winter through thick gloves, an activity allowed only while skating on Fridays. Under the watchful eyes of Bible school chaperones, they fell in love. On July 3rd, 1949, George asked Kay to be his wife. After a night of prayer and thinking about it, Kay said yes to George's proposal and accepted his engagement ring, purchased with the proceeds from a load of wheat harvested that summer. Two years later on July 7, 1951, they were married in a Mennonite Brethren Church in Abbotsford, British Columbia.Kay could anticipate good ideas and one day she calmly suggested that George become a doctor. Having never had the thought prior to her suggestion, and without thinking much more about it, he agreed it would be a good idea and they began a life and career together. The studies began, punctuated by the birth of

LaDonna followed by graduation and the birth of Darlene. Twins Gerald and Philip followed six years later. For George and for Kay all successes were joint successes, enjoyed in unity, welcomed together in love. George described Kay at this time as independent, strong, faithful and firm. They matched each other in this, upholding a family, career, ministry, and love together.In August of 1956, Kay said goodbye to her own mother, aged 56. As she crossed this threshold year in her own life, she recognized the gift of time her mother had never known. Having Philip and Gerald later in life, she sometimes wondered if she'd see their wives and their children. As each year passed, she commented frequently how grateful to God she was to live so long, how much she had seen, how golden the years had been.Starting in the 70's, Kay became the Class Administrator of the Vancouver class of Bible Study Fellowship. Kay lead in this way for twelve years, thrilled with the opportunity of teaching the Bible, her favourite book, to women of all ages. Even as her memory faded, the word of God never left her. Kay could recite countless verses and was adept at encouragement using Scripture.Hardly a day went by in her last few years where she didn't express some heartfelt gratitude to God for the gift of long life. Still, she didn't like getting old, didn't like slowing down, didn't like the limitations age put on her. But it wasn't a self-centered frustration. Even in her last nine months, as she outlasted predictions on her illness, one gets the sense that her resistance to passing was inherently coming from a predisposition to serve others, ensure their comfort, watch over them, and care for them. This was most certainly evident in her love for her husband. All who observed her in her last days could see her affection for him increase in tenderness, attention, and concern for him. Where they once walked together as parallel pillars, columns firmly holding up a structure that might fall without their steadfast effort, they now leaned in together and on each other. The family they had built together now buttressed them, keeping them steady, ensuring they stood firm with the hope now in turn that gifts of wisdom, peace, grace, and faithfulness could be reciprocated. Her daughters rose to every challenge, reflecting her tenderness with tenderness towards her; appearing with words and acts of honour to praise her, standing up in hours of need to call her blessed.Grateful to a godly mother, it was easy now to serve her, watch her, care for her. Unwavering she left them; steady now they live on.Kay Goertzen is survived by her husband George, daughters LaDonna (son in law Mel) and Darlene (son in law Mike); sons Philip (daughter in law Noni), and Gerald (daughter in law Debbie), twelve grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.