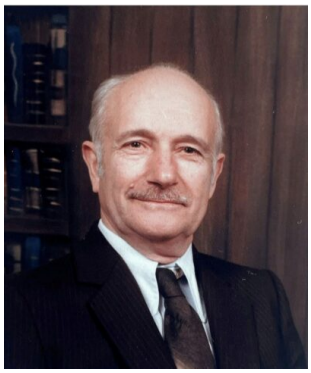

REMEMBERING

Peter Krueger

July 17, 1927 - March 27, 2025

Peter went home to be with his Lord and Saviour on Thursday, March 27 at 3:55 pm. He leaves to mourn Katie, his wife of 39 years, seven children: Hank (Karla), Peter Jr. (Gisela), Jake (Loretta), Hans (Anna), Teresa (Earl), Walter (Lorna) and Paul (Helen), 15 grandchildren and 21 great grandchildren.

Peter was born in Siberia and moved to the Molotschna area of Russia (now part of the Ukraine) at the age of three. His family settled in Nickolaidorf. His father died of a farming accident when Peter was seven years old. That left his mother alone with four young children.

During the second world war, the German army invaded Russia. When they were finally forced to retreat, many of the Mennonite colonies went back to Germany with them. Peter and his family joined the great trek. The Russian army pursued them and overtook them. Peter was separated from his family. His mother and older sister with her husband and small child were forced back to Russia. Peter and two sisters managed to make it to Germany.

Upon arrival in Germany, Peter was immediately conscripted into the army. He was seventeen years old. After basic training in Czechoslovakia, he was sent to the front. Very quickly, he was severely injured and was taken to a convalescent camp in Germany. He was unconscious for an unknown amount of time and when he awoke, the war was over. He began a three year journey of recovery. During this time he searched for his two sisters and found them in a nearby refugee camp. He was able to join them.

He had come to salvation on the battlefield. As he lay injured and ready to pass out, he remembered his mother encouraging him to give his life to the Lord and he did not want to die without being saved. He joined the Mennonite Brethren Church.

Peter was young and quite a charmer and quickly became a favourite of the cook.

He was often sent on errands to pick up food for the kitchen and in this way was able to get extra food during a time of great scarcity.

It was alway his intention to emigrate to Canada but at the time the doors were closed so he and his sisters sailed to Paraguay instead. They docked in Buenos Aires in Argentina and then made their way up river and over land until they reached the Chaco in Paraguay.

Upon arriving in Paraguay, he was given a piece of land so he could start to farm but he needed an income to support himself until the land could produce. He began to work at the blacksmith shop of Franz Unger, building wagons. He worked there for a year. During this time, he caught the eye of the eldest daughter of Franz, Helen, and they were married within the year.

Now it was time to begin farming. For three years he tried to make a go of it but the work was hard and the climate hot. Greener pastures beckoned in Brazil and he packed up his family (Hank was born at this time) and headed overland to settle in a small town in the very south of Brazil called Clevelandia in the province of Parana. He bought some land on credit next to the river that bordered Brazil and Argentina and began to farm. He planted an orchard and planted wheat. The climate was similar to that of southern British Columbia. (Peter Jr. and Jake were born here.) After four years, it became obvious that the land was not fertile enough to yield much produce and another move was made, this time back to Paraguay, but just long enough to get papers to travel to Canada. (Hans was born during this time.) He took the family to Winnipeg, Manitoba. His two sisters and their families had already emigrated there.

Peter spent seven years in Winnipeg, working on construction in the summer and in the factory in the winter. Teresa and Walter were added to the family during this time.

After seven years, Peter had had enough of the cold Manitoba winters so he packed up his family and moved to Vancouver. Here he worked at Sauder Doors until his early retirement at the age of fifty five. At this time a nephew, Paul Wiebe, was added to the family after he lost his parents.

The working conditions at the factory were not ideal and Peter quickly developed arthritis from his war wounds. His health deteriorated to the point that he had to retire and go on a disability pension. This was his opportunity to move to Clearbrook where he and Helen purchased a home on Hopedale Avenue. The children were all independent by then.

Peter settled into retirement, his health began to improve and he began to enjoy a life of leisure: watching hockey, gardening, keeping pigeons, playing shuffleboard and having a weekly mate with fellow retirees. This happy routine was quickly shattered when Helen developed cancer and died at the age of fifty eight.

After one and a half years, Peter married again. Katie Doerksen was added to the family. For thirty nine years, Peter and Katie enjoyed their retirement and the attentions of Peter’s children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Peter was always involved in the church. He served as an usher and a deacon. In his role as deacon he would often visit people at care homes and was often called

upon to mediate in disputes between church members. He was often called upon to mediate disputes between family members as well. He took part in resettling refugees from Vietnam and spent time serving with Mennonite Disaster Service.

Peter did not have a lot of education. He was forced to leave school after grade four but he was a lifelong learner. He read voraciously and kept up with current events. His strength of character was evident in the way he conducted himself with his family and how he served others. He will be missed.