



REMEMBERING
Victor Henry Janzen

June 24, 1944 - June 23, 2024



"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." 2 Timothy 4:2

Victor Henry Janzen was truly one of a kind. His life was marked by service, kindness, humor, creativity, a spirit of adventure and love for the Lord. The first-born child of Henry and Kay Janzen, Vic was born in Chilliwack on June 24, 1944. His early years were spent steeped in his Mennonite roots, living close to extended family in Chilliwack and Abbotsford. These were formative years for Vic as he grew up alongside his cousins and was immersed in the farming life as he helped with collecting eggs, butchering pigs and making farmer sausage with family. His life-long love of grieva (pork cracklings) and other Mennonite delicacies were firmly established in these early years of his life.

Vic's brother Gerry was born in 1946, and over the years became his fellow-intellect and best friend. Sister Peggy was born in 1949 and was the little princess of the family.

In 1953 the Janzens relocated to Whitehorse, Yukon. In his memoir, Dad wrote: "I wanted to change my name to 'Buck.' This rugged name, I felt, would be more commensurate with my new life as a hunter and trapper and general adventurer." Indeed, this time in the Yukon helped to forge his pioneering spirit.

It was when the family moved to North Delta in 1958 that he met Claudia. The story goes that the first time he laid eyes on her, she was holding a porcupine quill she had pulled off a carcass on her way to school, and he immediately felt a bond with

her owing to his time in the Yukon. He fell in love with her instantly and competed for her attention throughout high school. His pursuit was ultimately successful, for how could she not fall for his charms? They graduated and went as charter students to Trinity Junior College.

Vic and Claudia were married on March 12, 1965. Their son, Carl Victor, was born in December 1965 while Dad was teaching in Delta. In the years that followed, Vic continued his studies at UBC while simultaneously continuing to teach, including a year teaching in a one-room schoolhouse near Prince George. Returning to North Delta in June of 1967, Vic completed his degree at UBC and secured a position at Cloverdale Junior Secondary. Their daughter, Lisa Mary, was born in January 1968.

Vic often joked that he entered the teaching profession as a kind of revolt against his own hatred of his school days. Indeed, the stories he told about the creative activities he planned for his classes surely left his students with a completely different experience than that of his own. From Delta to Prince George, Cloverdale, Rosedale, Sardis and Chilliwack, Vic's more than 25 years of teaching were rich and rewarding. His ability to connect with people was at the core of his success as a teacher, as he could just as easily establish rapport with a rough-hewn youngster, a bookish intellect, or a single mom. One of the highlights of Vic's teaching career was the Forestry Program he helped to develop with his colleague Miriam Soet. Vic retired from teaching in 1999.

Interspersed between his years of teaching, Vic developed a passion for log houses. He attributed this interest to his time growing up in the Yukon where he often stumbled across trappers' cabins while tending to his trap line. Later, he became connected with a Swedish builder who taught him the tricks of the trade. Dad built his first log house for the family in Langley. "There was so much interest in log buildings in the waning hippy days that I quit my day job as a high school teacher and established myself as a professional log builder". Vic was one of the founding members of The International Log Building Association. In 1977 Vic became the chief instructor at the B. Allan Mackie School of Log Building, which he referred to as one of the most interesting and adventurous years of his life. In 1978 Dad received an architectural scholarship from Canada Mortgage and Housing to write a how-to guide to building a log home. At this time the family moved to Columbia Valley while Vic wrote his book, "Your Log House".

Several years later Vic and Claudia bought her parent's farm in Columbia Valley. Dad fancied himself a gentleman farmer, a rancher raising beef cattle, all the while still teaching. The years in Columbia Valley were a golden time for the five granddaughters who loved nothing more than playing in the barns and fields at what they still fondly call "The Farm".

Church has always played a vital role in Vic's spiritual and personal life. Vic and Claudia were early members at Sardis Community where they have invested their lives since 1978. Vic was involved with many aspects of leadership throughout the years, serving as board moderator, home group leader, mentor, prayer warrior and most recently as chair of the pastoral care committee. Vic felt strongly that "the best leaders in the church are sitting in the pews", and both he and Claudia never hesitated to jump in and do what needed doing. His deep and resonant voice was

often heard narrating at Christmas and Easter events and his flair for the dramatic even once found him carrying a lamb across his shoulders to illustrate a point for a children's message.

Vic always had time for others. Known for taking in strangers in need, giving financial help, mentoring and befriending many, he was often unaware of the impact he made. He had a way about him that instantly put others at ease, and many folks unburdened their angst to his listening ears and non-judgmental heart. His outgoing personality brought him many friends throughout his life.

Dad's heart of service and adventure was given space to expand during his retirement. He started a renovation business, working with his friend Sha'tara. Beginning in the early 2000s, he volunteered with His Hands and Feet. He served as crew leader on seven house-building projects in Mexico with this ministry. Claudia accompanied him on several of these projects as did their daughter Lisa and grandchildren at different times.

In 2004, Vic began volunteering with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS). Dad served with MDS on many projects in places such as Barriere, Louisiana, Rock Creek, Williams Lake and Fort McMurray. Although in recent times Dad's health kept him from being able to go on work trips, he continued to serve on several MDS boards.

Vic also had the unique opportunity to travel to Siberia, first in 2009 to teach in a Pentecostal bible school in the city of Gorno-Altai and two years later to build a log church in a village near the Mongolian border. Dad loved to regale us with stories from his Russian pilgrimages which so clearly made an impression on him.

Dad had dabbled in oil painting in the 70s, but the pace of life and other creative endeavours put that on hold until he picked up his paintbrushes again in his retirement. He was prolific for many years, and his vibrant paintings depict parts of his life and travels, as well as his colorful personality. For a number of years, he belonged to a painting group that met weekly. One of the themes Vic went back to again and again in his paintings were sunflowers, which he loved. Interestingly, a sunflower plant mysteriously appeared this year in their backyard, even though they didn't plant it. It is as though God sent us this gift to remind us of our dear Vic.

Vic's greatest joy was his family. He was immensely proud of his children and grandchildren and nothing made him happier than spending time with them, along with their spouses and five great-grandchildren. Just one week before he passed away, the whole family got together to celebrate Father's Day with fresh strawberries and ice-cream, Dad's favorite dessert. Having his family around him, as well as the many friends who visited, gave him the strength and peace to face his last days.

Claudia was his closest companion and supporter for more than six decades. Whether it was drinking their morning coffee with a nibble of chocolate, watching their favourite shows in the evening, walking at the river, traveling at home or abroad, and even bickering lovingly as they cooked together, they were a team! Trips to Europe, Israel, Cuba, Mexico, as well as numerous cruises with Gerry and Trudy were some of their traveling highlights. A very special tenderness was evident between them as Claudia took such good care of her dear Vic in his final

months.

Truly, his was a life well-lived. The next time you savor a good cup of coffee or sip a fine Scotch, when you see a forest thick with fir trees or glimpse a towering golden sunflower, remember our beloved Victor.

