

HRE33

Mr. Warkentin

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January 3rd 2016

Johanna Dyck

Johanna Dyck was born on December 25, 1923 in Warwarowka, Ukraine. She was born into a family with one step-sister, Susana, who was born on October 21, 1915. Both of her parents had previously been married; however, their spouses had both passed away from typhoid. Johanna never got the opportunity to meet either set of her grandparents but wishes she had. At a young age, Johanna Dyck had two pets. Her cat was found in a pool of petrol and they cleaned it and called it their own. She had one very large dog named Max.

Being born in the Ukraine, Johanna experienced the day to day difficulties of communism under the power of Communism. As a pastime, Johanna would read and go to school. Her uncle was subscribed to a German magazine and Johanna remembers reading about the quintuplets for enjoyment. Johanna could not wait to get to school. School would always be a way to escape for a while and spend time with her friends and her teachers who she considered her role models.

Life for Johanna was never easy. At age six, her father was taken from her family to the Finnish border to work in a fishery. She would write letters back and forth to her father until they were reunited when she turned 15. In school, Johanna always talked with her friends and always hope for the day Germany might invade the Ukraine. She never supported the war, but

desperately wanted to escape communism. Johanna is eternally thankful to Germany for saving them. She will always be thankful for what Germany did for her and her family.

Once Germany had invaded the Ukraine, Johanna and her family moved into Germany behind the army in 1943, where she felt a sense of freedom from Russia. From Germany, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) urged Mennonites to settle to Canada for a new beginning and to settle in Canada; Johanna's family then made the decision to move to Canada. Johanna's family was then placed into a refugee camp before they would set off to Canada. However, Johanna's mother developed an illness where it showed scarring on the eye, and had to go into quarantine to get better before she could go to Canada.

MCC pushed for Johanna to move to Canada without her family so if the opportunity was difficult for immigration, she could easily become someone to sponsor her family. She left Germany on June 11, 1948 ahead of her family. Once she made it to Canada, she stayed with her mother's cousin who sponsored her to come to Canada. She moved to Manitoba, however after two weeks, a Mr. Boese came to Manitoba to take women to work in a cannery in St. Catharines, Ontario.

While in Germany, Johanna had met a nice man named Ben at a friend's wedding. He seemed very nice to her and she enjoyed his big gentle hands. Ben was living in Leamington, Ontario and had come before Johanna. When he heard Johanna was in St. Catharines, he went to visit her two times and Johanna came to visit him once in Leamington. In October of 1948 they were engaged and then were married on November 27th, 1948. In the Essex County area, they began their life together and had a total of three children, all boys. Johanna says, "They were a joy to be around....sometimes".

Today Johanna lives in the apartments at the Leamington Mennonite Home and spends a majority of her time spreading her joy around with residents. She spent a majority of her time tending to her beloved husband Ben. After his passing she now helps the activity helpers at night with feeding many in the home who require assistance.

These are words of wisdom that she passed on to her children “Never forget to pray.” These are words she wishes she could have passed on to her grandchildren. One of the difficulties she has found with aging is the fact that you must face that you are getting older, and that many of your friends around you, you begin to lose. However she says; “Face life as if you have to make the best of it. Never take life for granted.” She never has a day where she regrets getting up and loves the life experiences she can share with many. Johanna may not notice, but all around she has a major impact on many people.

Johanna is always there to lean on and is always there to help anyone she can. She is very loving and caring. After spending many night at the Leamington Mennonite Home with Johanna, I do not think of her as someone I talk to, but I look to Johanna as my third grandmother. Johanna will always be known by many. She is someone who has had a large impact on my life.