

There is an old Cherokee saying: “When you are born, you cry, and the world rejoices. When you die, you rejoice, and the world cries”. How appropriate this saying is in light of the heartfelt and touching responses we have received after the announcement of the passing of our beloved John.

On behalf of my Starimama Martina, my aunts and uncles Mayda, John, Mark, Bernie, Luke, Marie, Peter, Bev, and my mother Lolly, I would like to thank you all for being here as we say goodbye to a devoted husband, known to his wife as **Ivan** a loving father – **Ata**– a joyful grandfather – **Stariata** – a great grandfather – **Ati** – an uncle – **Stric John** – and a dear friend – **Janez**.

To condense the 88 years of my Stariata’s life into a few short words such as this is quite difficult. There are countless stories to share. But I will touch briefly upon his life, in hopes of dutifully honouring his legacy.

Stariata’s incredible journey of life began on the 21st of March 1935. He was born in Lutersko Selo and grew up without a father – his dad passed away when he was four. Stariata quickly found companionship with the older men in the village and was often found where children did not go.

The Second World War left a large impact on him. His brother Vinko was taken hostage by occupational forces and was executed – his brother Tony was injured in the eye by a grenade, and his mother was arrested for sheltering members of the anti-communist Domobrance. All these experiences left in him a lifelong aversion to strife and violence, and imparted in him the courage to stand up for himself, and for all those who were downtrodden.

John did not like communism – he rebelled against their rules, and from the age of fourteen tried to escape it. Once, on foot with his cousin, he made it to his uncle’s house hours from home but was promptly sent back on the next train. On his second attempt he made it to Ljubljana but ran out of money and stowed back to Novo Mesto, once again by train. As they say if you don’t succeed, try, try again. A little older and more cunning, he gained permission from local authorities to visit Golica on the Austrian border, where with his brother Tony and friend Vinko Povse, he finally escaped from Yugoslavia.

After a year in Austria, he emigrated to Canada with his brother, where they were united with their sisters Mara and Slavka in December of 1954. Coming here to Toronto, he was trained as a shoemaker, but soon desired to do something else, and after a few tries landed a job as a bricklayer’s assistant, quickly learning the trade, which he then practiced all his life.

As a social man, John joined Baragov Krozek. This is where he met and swiftly became enamoured with a young girl named Martina Marn. This “wild, crazy, good-looking man” eventually captured the heart of “his Martina”, and on the 6th of October 1956, at the tender ages of 18 and 21, the two married and were joined in the deep love and faith that carried them until his death, 67 years later.

My Stariata was a devoted Catholic, and a proud Slovenian. His deep faith and commitment lead him to give his service and support to his community throughout his life. When he started his

own business with a friend, he was always ready to hire recently emigrated Slovenians and give them a helping hand. Big hearted, he helped whoever he could whenever there was need. As a child, he helped displaced local nuns to prepare wood for winter and would go on to support them from Canada. You can ask later about his angels. Stariata would frequently visit and spend time with his fellow parishioners and lent a hand in receiving donations to build Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal church – this church we're in right now – and laid many of the bricks in these walls himself. He helped many other churches with fundraising and repairs. With this same zeal he helped the Sisters of Mary build their residence.

He was always ready to support a good cause. He supported three student priests in Asia, and even travelled to Zambia to help Father Stanko Rozman build a house for the nuns who worked in the local hospital. His friendship with Father Stanko lasted decades – so how wonderful it was that they were able to meet in person just a day prior to his passing.

One of his last acts of love and devotion was the building of the kapelica of Kateri Tekakwitha, which stands near the old playground at the Slovenian Farm.

Stariata was a traveling man – and did so throughout his life with Martina and many of his friends by his side. His travels made memories that lasted a lifetime.

One also cannot forget his love of dogs. He was always so happy to have them come visit and would always play with them and be sure to have bones ready if he knew one would be visiting him.

And of course, he was a man with deep, strong ties to his family and his roots. His 6 kids gave him plenty of excuses to not only visit other families, but have other families visit him. As children, my aunts and uncles were constantly surrounded by many of their relatives and friends, especially on Sundays. From these countless visits come the now famous phrase –Še'enga pol pa gremo. Visiting friends was fun, but as kids sometimes you wanted to go home after Mass to watch TV or play outside. As they grew up however, that phrase took on a far more fun and memorable meaning for his family.

Stariata was always one for a big party. Those who attended one of the many pig roasts that were held over the years know what I am talking about. From the old cottage in Wymbolwood Beach, to the house in Bolton, and all the way to Slovenia in 2013, you knew at a pig roast you could always count on plenty of laughter, good food, friendly people, lively accordion, and of course lots of nazdravje and Še'engas.

Coming from a large family, to having one of his own, to joining together with other large families through many marriages just made this social, party animal even more vibrant and memorable. John always looked forward to a celebration – especially a wedding. He was very annoyed that he could not travel to Slovenia to celebrate Marisa and David's wedding this September. He was always asking his grandkids if they had boyfriends or girlfriends yet right til the end.

On that note - Stariata and Starimama were always together. He loved her until the day he died, and was never one to shy away from showing his affection. You could always see them at

banquets and weddings dancing away and holding hands as they were leaving for home. He loved his dancing, and as he and the kids got older, it became a real treat to dance with my dear old Stariata. One of the best memories everyone has is of John and all his family dancing to the song I'm Gonna Be – I'm sure you know it by those lyrics of I would walk 500 miles, It was truly a love song from John to Martina – google the lyrics and you will understand the depth of his love. But it wasn't just the lyrics written that made it special, but what we heard and added to it. When the song comes on, it was and is the Stariata Song. He would always be pulled to the out to the floor, everyone would dance around him in a circle, and instead of the usual dada dada, we would all sing Stariata, Stariata. He would dance and dance and dance, and Starimama would be laughing every single time.

Lastly, celebrating life also meant celebrating death. Living 88 years, he encountered many passings along the way. He always told mom “You are born, you live, you die, and life goes on”. As part of his faith, he tried to attend as many funerals as he could, to honour both the living and the dead. When more and more of his friends started passing on to the other side, he started thinking more on his mortality and began planning his wishes for when his time eventually did come. His final year lasted more than a decade, and we had to compare notes to see what his latest revision was. Today we honoured those wishes as best we could, and I'm sure he would be very happy with his send off.

Dr. Seuss once said, “Don't cry because its over, smile because it happened!”. Here's to you John Tratnik. Še'enga.

Thank you.