



Ludvik Stajan Eulogy – funeral March 19, 2012 – by Bill Stajan

On behalf of my mother, my sisters Andrea & Carol, brother Mike, and myself, we would like to thank you all for being here. We knew today would be difficult.....the longing to hug our dad one last time.....to see his smiling faceand hear his cheerful voice. We can however, take solace in the fact that we have all of you here to help celebrate his life by sharing our memories, shedding a few tearsbut mostlyremembering his laughter.

Preparing this eulogy was quite a challenge. Dad was so many things to us that it's hard to know where to begin. What should we include?..... What should we leave out?.... He was our father, our mentor, and one of our best friends, too. When we think about him, the first feeling that rises in our hearts is gratitude for his support and guidance, and also for fun times we had together. For us, the most important thing about today..... is the opportunity it gives usto say "**thank you**" as loudly and clearly as we can.

Ata was born in a small town named Kapla, close to the city of Maribor, in the northern part of Slovenija. His humility must have been borne of being the eldest of 15 children and living in a small 2 bedroom farmhouse.

He left home at 18 and began working as a bookkeeper near Novo Mesto. This is where he was introduced to my mother, by a friend who was dating her sister. His future mother-in-law was immediately impressed by him because he was a budding businessman who knew how to present her with gifts whenever possible.... but especially because he was a devout catholic. This brought them her blessings in order to escape the country's political turmoil together, even though they weren't yet married.

They had to immigrate separately. Our mother arrived in Canada in 1950, and went on to Toronto. When our father arrived a few months later, not realizing the size of Canada, he was very disappointed that she wasn't waiting for him at the docks in Halifax. With his new friend Frank, they went to Kapuskasing to serve their "immigration contracts" as lumberjacks. (Yes, can you imagine my father as a lumberjack?) While there, a friend sent him notice that his "girl" was getting plenty of attention in Toronto. The axe and saw were dropped and he rushed back to Toronto.

Our father married his sweetheart in 1952 and began his life as a devoted husband and father to five children. He was working three jobs to support his family and still finding time to take us out on family excursions each Sunday and also do community work through the church. Together they instilled in us love and respect to one another, our faith in God, our devotion to family and the importance of giving back.

Eventually he became grandfather to 14, and great grandfather of 5 and 1/2 children. As the grandchildren grew, each and everyone developed a special and unique bond with their grandfather. His grandchildren were the bright spot in his life. He touched the lives of his children with his infectious smile and generosity, maintaining his trademark sense of humor all the way to the end.

As the co-founder of ABC Fire Door, dad turned a small family business into a successful company. His work, in a curious way, was a kind of prayer -- a way he connected with something beyond himself, a way he tuned into the meaning of service, of giving to others in an unreasonable way -- an experience I would only learn much later in life. Although he enjoyed the challenges that

came with running his own business, the most gratifying part was going to work every day with his sons, and eventually, his grandsons. Dad treated all his employees like family. He was a fair employer who showed compassion and humility for all his employees. He helped his employees through their hardships as well as celebrated their special occasions over a “Scotch” or two.

Dad had great pride in his Slovenian heritage; he was committed to supporting the growth of the Slovenian community in Toronto. He has been a vital fundraiser and contributor for many charities and good causes including the building of both Slovenian churches in Toronto, Dom Lipa, Share Life, St. Stanislaus College (Ljubljana), Karitas, the Papal visits, the scouting organization, Slovenia Credit Union, and numerous church and business functions. With a smile on his face he would approach for donations and had no difficulty raising them. In turn, Ata was never one to say no. He not only financially supported various cultural exchanges and groups, but with our mother opened their home to many visitors from Slovenia and abroad.

His voluntary and philanthropic endeavours were many, but it was his ability to remain humble that made him a leader, and more importantly, just “one of the boys”. He loved his friends at work, at the Slovenian farm and in the community. He had an amazing bond with his family and in-laws, who were amongst his best friends. He did not exclusively belong to his own generation but rather to all generations. Somehow, he became a friend to all our friendsand then, our children’s friends. We had to share him – but we didn’t mind. He had an infectious personality and had the ability to really connect with people. Even in his last days he had that “iron handshake grip” of his.

As an equally proud Canadian, our father quickly found a love for our nation’s national sport of hockey. But never in his wildest dreams did he imagine seeing his family name written across the back of a Toronto Maple Leaf jersey, above the number 14. The first time he saw this was an emotional moment that brought tears to his eyes.... as the number 14 has always been representative of our late brother Bobby.....as well as Ata’s fourteen grandchildren, his 14 brothers and sisters and our mother’s birthday.

Even through personal tragedy he never failed to give his best to anyone who needed his support. He brought a positive enthusiasm to everything he did whether it be work or play. He loved life; he loved people. Make no mistake, our father was not perfect, but who in this world is? He was, however, I am happy to say, perfectly himself... a warrior... a teacher... a man of great integrity and faith... and for that we are forever grateful.

Although, our father is now gone, his legacy lives on and memories of him will be cherished by so many lives that he has touched. He lived a full life and definitely made his mark in this earth. And for that, his life should be celebrated.

All of these vivid images swimming around my head ... they’re pictures of compassion, faith, and moments of intense love. These are my roadmap to guide me. Everything I need to know about being a good person, dad has already given me.

You don’t choose your family. They are God’s gift to you..... and today.....we would like to thank God for gifting us with this amazing man.

But we are mostly privileged to say this one thing:

Of all that he was – He was our Dad.

“Nasvidenje Ata!”