

Stane Šajnovič Eulogy

Wow! what an amazing life my dad, Stanko/Stan led. From beginning to end he did it his way. Stan was born in Veščici, Slovenija on November 29, 1927. He learned from a young age that to succeed one must be willing to struggle and to sacrifice. He was a young apprentice in his father's cabinet shop, that also made doors, windows, and during slower winter months, caskets. His faith and deep commitment to community service were formed early at the beautiful church on top of the hill in Razkrižje, just a stone's throw away from the Croatian border where he was an altar server in the extremely strict Vatican One era. In 1944, as the Germans were retreating, he was conscripted to dig trenches for the Germans. As the Russians advanced, they conscripted the same young men to lead the Russians behind enemy lines to sabotage the German lines. When the Second World War ended everyone that helped push the Germans out was rewarded with a post in the new government structure. Stan was asked to be a police officer in his region, and he accepted the position. It was during this time that while attending a show at the local theater he met his future wife, Josephine. After a little while, the detachment commander told the officers that they would have to sign Communist Party papers, renounce their faith, and go to Russia for more training which turned out to be nothing but an attempt to further indoctrinate them. Several of the officers decided to form Matjaževa Vojska (Matthew's Army) also known as the Križarji (Knights of the Cross). Working underground they tried to reinstate a democracy in their country. This was difficult, because while Matthew's Army was being formed, Slovenia saw a continuous purge of the intellectuals, private business owners, previous government officials and any detractors to the new dictatorship. Those that would have supported the cause were seeking freedom elsewhere in the world. Perhaps the best way to illustrate my Dad's fervent belief in this cause came from Helena Gorše, who currently lives in Cleveland. When Helena heard of Dad's passing, she gave the family a call to give her condolences. She wanted us to know that she remembered how Stan carried her to safety under his arm as he crossed the sealed border. She remembered how the border was heavily mined and patrolled by soldiers with machine guns and dogs. Their orders were to capture or kill border crossers. As Helena continued to retell her story, she began to list all the members of the brigade and as the conversation unfolded, we soon realized that

Stan was the last living member of his squad. They fought as a resistance force until the spring of 1948 when Tito broke rank with Stalin and the British felt the threat from Yugoslavia was very minimal. It was then that the brigade scattered throughout the free world: Argentina, Australia, England, France, U.S.A, and Canada. Stan wanted to get as far away as he could from communism, so he chose Australia. He had an uncle in Melbourne who sponsored him, and on arrival in Australia was fortunate to get a job in the furniture industry. It was during this time that he was introduced to Father Basil, a Slovenian Franciscan priest. Stan quickly joined him in gathering clothes, food and finding shelter for Slovenian refugees. Once settled in Melbourne, Stan began to write letters to Josephine, who was still in Slovenia studying to become a medical doctor. Letters were sent back and forth between the two, but it wasn't until 1953 that Josephine was able to escape and join Stan in Australia. In 1954, as the Slovenian community in Australia got larger and stronger, they gathered some money and were able to start Slovensko Društvo Melbourne (Slovenian Association Melbourne) and "Vestnik" a biweekly newspaper. They built the beautiful church, St. Cyril and Methodius in Kew, Melbourne which is still used today by the large Slovenian community. In 1956, Stan and Josephine married and became very involved with the Slovenian community and Stan was named an honorary lifetime member of Slovensko Društvo (Melbourne) for all his efforts during his stay in Australia. In 1959, my parents immigrated to Canada and settled in Toronto where they found work easily. They wondered why the city would become a ghost town on weekends - the north was calling-- and they joined the craze in 1960 by purchasing a farm in Sebright with the intent of developing a summer campground. Stan renovated the house, built a bandstand with dance floor, turned the stone walls of an old bank barn into a swimming pool and launched Valentine Ranch. A 6000 square foot barn was built in 1963. All the post holes were dug by hand; every rafter slung into place manually and every nail driven by hand. In 1964, son Stanley was born, and Stan started a small turkey farm. In 1966, Erika was born, and a second barn was built. In the early 1970's supply management was being suggested to stabilize commodity prices for the dairy and poultry sectors of the Canadian Primary Agricultural Industry and Dad was very involved in these discussions. In 1974, the Ontario Turkey Board was established, and Stan was elected as his district representative where he served with distinction for 22 years. Also in 1974, Stan built two more barns and could now

farm full time. He continuously updated and expanded the turkey business and his hard work led to a very successful venture. Education was very important to Dad, and he fully supported all his children's educational endeavours. Working from home Stan was able to support a multitude of projects during his life. He gave his time, wisdom and used his talents to further many causes such as the local Scout Troops, joining friends to start a Turkey restaurant "Wattles", building several condominiums in Guelph. He was also a staunch supporter of Old Smokey Ski resort owned by a group of fellow Slovenians. Dearest to his heart were the Slovenian Memorial Cross at Martyr's Shrine in Midland, the Memorial Chapel to honour the fallen between 1945 and 1948 and dedicated to St. Barbara in Kamnik, Slovenia, Slovenski Dom in Toronto, the American Home Slovenian Newspaper, Dom Lipa, the Canadian Slovenian Historical Society, and the Planica Hunting and Fishing Club. Perhaps the most important to him, however, born of his strong moral belief in freedom, was his financial support of the Christian Democratic Party in a democratic Slovenia. His strong faith and thankfulness for his good fortune led him to pursue philanthropic work, not only in the church he attended, St. Columbkille's Parish in Uptergrove Ontario, but also St. Janez Nepomuka Parish in Razkrižje Slovenia and Holy Cross Parish in Križevci, Slovenia. The Orillia Soldiers Memorial Hospital Foundation was also an organization that he supported.

The lessons I learned from my Dad in the order that they were presented to me during his lifetime.

1) **Listen, behave, and work.** I will never forget a Christmas when Erika and I got only pencils and erasers. This was for the sub-par grades achieved in school and accordion. Teaching our children with tough love makes them understand that success comes from hard work, enormous effort, and great sacrifice. This is critical if we, as parents, want to raise the next generation of leaders.

2) **Learn to grow a garden. Harvest and preserve all you can.** We had a back room in the second barn and in the northwest corner was a 5 ft by 10 ft sandbox. Carrots were kept there. Lettuce was grown there, and potatoes went in the cold cellar; so too did the infamous red wine that was brought out when it came time to make a great business deal or discuss topics of the day with friends or business associates.

3) **Reach or stretch for perfection - you will grow if you do!**

4) **Stumbling is humbling** - it's great teaching.

5) How often we see parents off for vacation while the kids are left behind!!

Trips/vacations/holidays are family bonding time. Dad always made sure that we went everywhere as a family. There is no better way to learn or to be mentored, than to allow your eyes to see, your ears to hear and your big brain to absorb, store and adapt what you have heard and seen, particularly when associating with people that are older and wiser than yourself when you are a child. Their life's lessons become examples to guide you.

6) **God gave us two eyes, two ears and one mouth.** It's a pretty good ratio for the following reason: If you want to be a great negotiator, allow the other side to explain their view and ask your questions to gain clarification and deeper insight. It is only then, that you will be able to find the common ground that will lead to a consensus where everyone wins.

7) This one is for the young. You will say I am bored, not realizing until you are much older that **the most precious commodity you own is your time here on Earth.** Use it wisely; do not waste it because it disappears rapidly after a certain age. The odd lucky young person gets this truth early.

8) **Cherish your children; they are your greatest legacy.** Allow them to surpass you, not because you have slowed down as parents, but because you pushed them ahead of yourself. Because as they grow, so do you and all who surround you. Always be proud of them and tell them so. Always love them unconditionally even when they leave to pursue their dreams and aspirations, so one day they will return to you a little older and greatly wiser. It is my firm belief that no greater accolade a parent can receive than when their child's light shines brighter than their own.

9) **Never pray for your own wants, needs, or desires.** Because, if you do right by others, they will pray for you, and you will get more than you could ever ask for.

10) Live passionately, with determined drive and excellent execution, have a humble heart, pure purpose, a thoughtful mind, and with a resilient body.

11) **Smart people do not need smart phones.** You are missing what is going on around you. When you constantly look and text you become so accustomed to and expect instant gratification. You lose patience, the ability to communicate one

on one, or speak publicly in front of a lot of people. Your ability to write truly personal letters in cursive writing giving it that extra special human touch are all lost.

12) Here is a very hard one, for me at least. **Treat your children with great respect and dignity, sharing with them the importance of trust and honesty** by giving them the space they need as they grow into young adults; temper this with firmness and a healthy explanation when required.

13) **Your words and actions must always be your bond.** With kids do as I say not as I do, does not work. Do not expect things for yourself that you are not willing to do yourself. Treat everyone the way you want to be treated. **BE THE LIGHT THAT DRAWS PEOPLE TOWARDS YOU AND ENCOURAGES THEM TO FOLLOW YOUR GOOD EXAMPLE.**

In closing, Dad, you had a life well lived. You have left a huge pair of shoes to fill, and I am grateful that Teresa, who blessed me with three amazing children who are now magnificent young adults will be there to help me. Together with Mom, we will step into those huge shoes and try passionately to carry forward your lessons and continue with your commitment to be involved in the community. Dad, pray for us, and protect us until we meet again. Ata, ljubimo te in naj ti Bog da večni mir!

Stan Šajnovič Jr.