

Mary 'Mici' Lavrisa Obituary:

Peacefully at home with her family by her side, in her 102nd year, Marija "Mici" reunited with her husband Valentin of 30 years. She will forever be missed by her children Josie (Zvone), Tom, Frank (Nancy), Mary Ann, Helen (Jeff), and Marko (Cathy). She was a loving grandmother to Julie (George), Kathy (Akshay), Mark (Brittany), Rachel (Robert), Mark (Tana), Steve (Sarah), Evelyn (Jordan), Sarah, Matthew (Tessa), Michael, Alexander (Lindsay), Isabella, and Nates. Mary was a caring great-grandmother to Annika, Zoey, Sabina, Deven, Aleks, Vera, Wayne, Adeline, and Ari.

Mary believed in three pillars: faith, family, and her Slovenian community. Mary with her husband Valentin moved as close to the church as humanly possible, founding members of the Catholic Slovenian Church that supported the burgeoning Slovenian community that enriched Canada with their hard work, and commitment to faith and family.

As a mother, and a new Canadian, Mary wanted her children to both integrate and succeed in this new country. Arriving in Canada at the age of 28, marrying Valentin a year later, together they embarked on a new adventure – raising six (!) children who would successfully assimilate into a new culture and country. With English language skills still developing, Mary subscribed to Parents Magazine to educate herself on current trends, become informed on issues and practices to help her guide her children through their development. Managing (somehow) without family support which would have been readily accessible in her home country of Slovenia, Mary managed through six pregnancies, making three healthy meals each day on a shoestring budget, finding the energy to carefully wash and fold the laundry, nurse the kids through varied illnesses, and have fried chicken and potato salad ready for Sunday excursions to the Slovenian farm where the community came together to build strong families and maintain connection to their heritage and honour those who sacrificed so that Canada could benefit from the Slovenians who choose this country as their new home.

She was an avid member of her parish. Each and every morning at 7:45 Mary opened the side door of her home, walked to the backyard gate that opened on to OLMM Church's parking lot, and made her way to the front door to attend morning Mass. Mary was a 'soft' soprano and sang in the choir for many years, including as a soloist. She had a beautiful voice and in typical Mary fashion, was exceedingly modest about this special contribution to her church.

As a member of the Catholic Women's League she baked and knit for all fundraisers and bazaars. With six children in tow, some might say 'how did she possibly find the time, and energy?' – but in today's parlance, 'giving back' was second nature to Mary. To say she was a skilled baker is an understatement. Anyone who witnessed her ability to turn flour, eggs, water and apples into the most delicate strudel would say she was a pastry chef. To be the happy recipient – as all her children and their lucky families were – of a brown paper bag filled to the brim with the slimmest most delicate egg noodles that would transform a chicken broth into a savory meal, we knew we were the fortunate ones with every spoonful. Mary was one of the early members of the Widow's Club which sustained community among the many women who lost their hardworking husbands too soon.

As for knitting, Mary was a master. She could transform any yarn into whatever you wanted or needed it to be; hand-knitted socks (two-toned!); a buttoned vest; a tunic and shrug; baby booties and delicate

sweaters; even knitted dolls – soccer players and ballerinas, no less. Mary knit for her Slovenian friends in Dom Lipa – what did they need? – |A cardigan? Slippers? A cable vest with buttons? Mary could literally knit anything. And as for crochet, every Easter Mary's grandchildren were offered a crocheted chick full of delicious chocolate eggs with the only provision being they need to return the crocheted chick so it could be refilled next year.

Mary's generosity towards those in need was remarkable. She supported countless non-profits and charities - virtually anyone who came to her door received a \$25 dollar cheque, and this from a woman who measured her lentils in a battered tablespoon. She bought for herself few luxuries, if a new pair of shoes or a piece of fabric for a new outfit, sewn by one of her daughters is indeed a luxury. She saved her money, focused on those less fortunate, offered financial support to those family members in need, and then tended her vegetable garden, canning and preserving the bounty only to share it with everyone in her circle.

This is a heroic life that concluded after 101 years. For one so active and in service to others it is hard to imagine how she survived the last three years. The devotion and tender care of her family over these difficult years is a testament to the life she led, the Mother she was, and the Canadian we are so lucky to have welcomed.