

Eulogy for Lojze Knavs delivered by Elaine Knavs

The first time I met Louis, he was installing a basement shower, in a house that Alex had recently purchased. I should have known this was a clear sign that building, fixing and renovating were synonymous with everything that Louis did...and he did it well.

Louis was raised in a large family, in a centuries-old stone home. He left at age 12, with his older sister Slava, to live with another family. She worked as a housekeeper, while Louis worked as a stable boy, sleeping in the barn with the horses, all year round. He often spoke of how the two of them would undertake the five hour walk home to celebrate Christmas and Easter with their family.

As a teenager, he witnessed many unspeakable events of war. He eventually made the hazardous journey to a refugee camp in Austria. He would spend three years there, before emigrating to Canada. He said it was his father, who advised him to make his home in Canada. As a refugee, he was obligated to fulfil a contract working for the railway. He was in Quebec, working for CN, when he found himself treated to apple pie by a local family. The first thing he learned to say in English, was "apple pie".

After arriving in Canada, he only returned to Slovenia once, in the late 1960's. He was reacquainted with his younger siblings who were very, very young when he left, and he saw his parents for the last time. Decades later, Alex and I went to Louis' home town and met this wonderful family. Even though he had left so very long ago, it was obvious Louis was loved, and missed. When we returned from our trip, I told Louis how kind, and welcoming his relatives had been to us and it brought a tear to his eye.

In the mid 1980's, Alex informed me he planned to build a cottage...himself! Louis enthusiastically offered his experience, guidance and support, not to mention a lot of free advice. So, for a few years, Alex, Louis and I spent many, many weekends together at Kahshe Lake. Mary always sent along a cooler full of groceries. After a hard day's work, Louis always looked forward to a big meal, especially if it was a salad, potatoes and a well-done steak -- a very well-done steak. He didn't hold back when it came to informing me of the health hazards of eating a steak that was even the slightest bit pink inside. In his opinion, this would surely do me in! Sitting at the end of the table, he glanced at my plate, waved at me and said, "Bye Elaine...see you!"

Yes, Louis had a way with words. Many years ago, he got a new wedding band. Instead of having it sized the usual way, he just said, "Why do I need to do that? Just tell them to make it the size of a three-quarter inch pipe!"

Once Louis retired, Mary's hobby of tracking down antique furniture kept him busy. He could repair and refinish a damaged piece of furniture so it looked like new. He was very happy to spend the day at home puttering in his workshop or at the cottage.

Louis wasn't one to stay in one place for too long. After a family dinner, and some small talk, he was usually ready to head home. While Mary was deep in conversation, she

would eventually realize Louis was missing, only to be found in the driveway with the car running. He always enjoyed time with his family, but when it was time to go, it was time to go.

After a very full life of 95 years, perhaps it was time to go. We hope there is a polka band in heaven; your dance partner is waiting. Bye, Louis....see you...