

## Stella Babič Eulogy

Good morning everyone and welcome to our celebration of the mass for Stanica, Stella, Teta Stanka, Staramama, Mama.

99! My mother reached 99 years of age! We are truly grateful to have been blessed with her.

There have been messages and remarks from people remembering Stella as she generally was. Kind, smiling, happy, generous, hospitable. Amazing, mighty, one of a kind, always seeing things in a positive light. Indeed, for any hardship, she was a consummate problem solver. Gifted with the ability to multitask, organize anyone, anything, anywhere, anytime.

She had remarkable spacial awareness. The way she moved was very efficient. How she organized cupboards, how she packed. The way she got stuff into suitcases always amazed me. Everything so neatly folded and distributed to avoid getting creased or crunched. A case packed by Mama resembled a giant, travelling Bento box. She could have given Martha Stewart a run for her money.

That spacial awareness, I think, also made her a good driver. She attributed her driving skill to her job operating an ox cart, at times using it or a bicycle to take mail from the train station to various post offices around Prlekija. At Dom Lipa people noticed and commented when she was navigating around with her walker.

"You're a good driver! Good driving Stella."

She'd reply. "Yah, I learned as a teenager, driving an ox cart around."

She loved animals. Farm animals especially. Growing up she was responsible for the baby chicks, ducks and geese. In recent years, she became an avid fan of Dr Pol and would run commentary his efforts.

She loved school, was a good and eager student, a quick study. She particularly enjoyed phys-ed and fondly remembered being an angel in the St Nicholas Day pageant. She was very sad when her schooling was halted by home and world circumstances of the 1930s.

She had an ear for languages. Learning German and English quite proficiently on the job and by reading the newspaper, which also satisfied her curiosity and desire to keep up with current events. When she got to Toronto, she read the Star every day, a habit she continued at Dom Lipa. She could regularly be spotted with it in the library.

She also mastered universal language; the language of the soul, eyes, expressions, gestures, postures. She saw people in their entirety, whether they realized it or not.

We knew what she meant without her needing to say a word. By a look, a nod, by how she handled her pots and pans. She usually handled them with care but there could also be clanging and banging coming from the kitchen when she was upset.

Mama had keen powers of observation. Her antenna always picked up what was wrong or amiss. She noticed what was missing or running out and always did something about it. She was particularly inspired and impressed by the work of the CWL. Their efforts to promote faith, hope and charity at the parish made her proud to be a member.

She had exacting standards. The bar was high and we had no choice but to measure up. Kifelčki had to be filled and rolled just so. Towels and sheets folded this way not that. Flowers watered with the water from the barrel not straight from the hose. If you haven't yet heard the noodle story, ask us about it later.

She had an eye for the aesthetic. Appreciating beauty, tidiness, order, and the natural world. Her garden was her canvas, splashed with colour and order. Petunias in the front window boxes. Impatience, rožmarin and snap dragons in the beds underneath.

Garden vegetables and lettuce were neatly interspersed with various flowering medicinal plants. Her garden and green thumb were the envy of the neighbourhood. She tried and succeeded with recipes for medicinal teas. She made cough syrup. Late spring there were 5L glass jars lining the back stairs to the house. Inside the jars were pine buds we'd collected earlier in the season and sugar equal in weight. This simple combo would ferment in the sun and supply us with effective cough syrup through the winter.

Her cooking and baking were so good, it simply goes without saying. We remain fascinated by her skill at stretching that strudel dough so thinly across the table.

Her adventurous palate was most noticeable during our trips to the Mandarin restaurant. She'd always start with a cup of hot and sour soup. She never ate a lot but for her second course her plate was piled with a little bit of this and a little bit of that. Her most recent flavour combo was napolitanke with yogurt. She'd encourage you to try.

Her art in the kitchen was influenced by working in the hospital kitchen in Paris, ON (her first job in Canada). When she and Lojze opened a restaurant in Sherkston, she watched their Chinese cook closely. She was fascinated by the workings at the French deli in Toronto where she shucked snails and cleaned frogs legs. Fine points were honed by helping Mrs Springer repeatedly feed the masses out of the tiny kitchen at Manning, then bit bigger kitchen here at Browns Line, and finally at Dom Lipa in its early days. Summer Sunday mornings, she would get up so early to make us a packed lunch for The Farm. Fried chicken. I'm sure part of her strategy was to wake us up with that wonderful aroma so we'd get out the door and make it in time for mass.

Mama taught us to pray and to be grateful. We didn't regularly say the rosary or have a family prayer hour. There wasn't time. She worked hard at home during the day and then at night cleaning offices at IOL. Ate was at work or serving on some committee. We were at school, or otherwise entrusted to stay out of trouble. But before every meal, breakfast, lunch and dinner, we were crossing ourselves and giving thanks. And before we were old enough to manage ourselves, she was making the sign of the cross over our foreheads, lips and hearts.

In these final months, prayer predominated our time with her. Her mind was increasingly drawn to her early years, the difficult times. Prayer was calming. This final journey was hard and took a long time. The restlessness was hard to witness and made me angry. Upon reflection, I now understand. There were difficult things for her spirit to resolve.

Mama, you are with Jesus and Mary now. We know you are welcome and in the best company. And everything there is not just ok, bit just right.