

Good Morning.

Thank you all for sharing this time with us, as we celebrate the life of our mother and her final farewell. I can hear her say, "you made my day."

It was the little things that made our mom happiest - a phone call, a card, a surprise visit from her grandchildren or our dad pouring her a gin and tonic - light on the tonic. She was grateful for everything life gave her, and took comfort in her faith, her family, her community, her coffee. - - - She always loved her coffee.

Slavka's love for her husband and family were core to her being. She was a friend and confidante to many, and cherished the roles of wife, mother, mother-in-law and grandmother above all else ... and just as much, the roles of sister, sister-in-law and Teti Slavka.

We feel blessed to have had her as our mother.

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Her story began on February 14, 1927 - the fourth of nine children. The Tratnik family home was in Otočec, Slovenija. A happy childhood was shaken, when their father died prematurely, leaving their mother to raise nine young children. As siblings, they worked hard, and were encouraged to support one another, forging their strong bond, which has lasted a lifetime.

Slavka was a teenager when World War II began. As with many from that generation, they experienced tremendous hardships. Still, the family risked punishment, by bravely offering their home as a refuge to young men, whose lives were in danger.

Shortly after the war ended, Slavka met our father, Ludvik. Political unrest continued to plague the country, resulting in his relocation from Kapla to Novo Mesto, where he worked as a bookkeeper.

It was here that he befriended Milan Junc, who at the time was dating Slavka's sister. One Sunday afternoon, Milan brought Ludvik along for a visit to the Tratnik home. While Milan went in, Ludvik waited behind the stables until he was summoned by Milan with permission to enter the family home. To this day, our Stric John clearly remembers, and often imitates, Milan's voice calling out ... Luuuuuudviiiiik. This fateful visit is how it all began. Immediately smitten with Slavka, it didn't take long before she became his girl.

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In 1950, with her mother's blessing, Slavka and Ludvik made their escape to Austria, where they spent two years in a refugee camp, before making their way to Canada in search of a better life. Slavka went first, her citizenship sponsored by her sister, Mara, who, two years earlier, courageously escaped on her own. A full year would pass before Ludvik made his journey across the ocean. It was fate again, that on this voyage, he would meet Frank Osredkar, who he introduced to our Teti Mara.

Speaking of Teti Mara ...

Sibling rivalry never existed between these two sisters ... quite the opposite actually. Their differing personalities not only complimented each other, but served to strengthen their undeniably close connection. The **two** of them were inseparable. It is no coincidence that they were born two years apart, emigrated two years apart and in the end passed away two years apart. To each other, they were more than just family.

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In 1952, Slavka and Ludvik were married and began to settle into their new lives.

At this time, Slavka and Mara sponsored the arrival of their two younger brothers, Tone, who married Ivanka and John, who married Martina. These four couples became an integral part of our lives. They were always appreciative of the wonderful times, and stood strong together through the tragic times.

For many years, we all lived as neighbors, growing up with our cousins, enjoying each other's company and forming lifelong friendships. Over time, the neighborhood became home to more Stajan families and close friends, porch gatherings became an evening ritual and there was never an empty seat at the kitchen table.

There was an open invitation to 162 Delta, which welcomed countless guests from across the street or across the ocean. My mom and dad were gracious hosts and this is where we witnessed the love and support that family undeniably provides.

Our mother worked tirelessly to make our home a comforting place to be - you could always feel the warmth walking through the door. Our parents had a mutual love and respect. Our father was always proud of our mom, and she, a caring and devoted wife to him.

They were firm, but fair; instilling their moral values and strong work ethic in each of us. There was a time for work and a time for play. Saturdays were for Slovenian school, household chores and sports. On Sundays, music was our alarm clock - polka or opera whatever mood our Dad was in. The smell of roast in the oven filled the air as we prepared ourselves for Sunday mass, a gathering both spiritual and social. The evenings ended with an episode of Bonanza. - - - She loved little Joe.

The Slovenian community and the church played an instrumental part in our upbringing - grounding us and providing a true sense of belonging. Little did we know that as we began raising our own families, those same core values by which we were raised would be passed on to our children.

[PAUSE - COUNT TO 3]

Our mother lost a part of her when our youngest brother Robert died at the age of 21. Even with a broken heart, we watched as she carried herself with strength, dignity and grace. Her faith was tested. At the encouragement of Father Sodja, she volunteered her time at Dom Lipa, a Slovenian Seniors Home. This proved to be the perfect remedy, as it brought her immense joy and personal fulfillment, resulting in over 20 years of service.

Giving back to their community was not a choice for our parents. They were willing and active members of the Slovenian parish and farm. Our mother was one of the original members of Ženska Liga, the Catholic Women's League. This group of women banded together and their charitable efforts contributed immensely to parish upkeep while preserving Slovenian culture.

Alongside others, our parents also devoted their time to the Slovenian farm to help build the grounds that our families enjoy today. Slavka could often be found in the pool, getting her laps in. - - - She loved to swim.

Another source of joy were her grandchildren. It was them who taught her how to REAAALLY hug, We would tease her, as it was something we only received on Christmas and birthdays. She was a staramama of 14, a fortuitous number in the Stajan family, and a great grandmother of 17. She had a unique gift for making each of them feel special: homemade lunches during elementary school days, trips to the corner store for fuzzy peaches and sour patch kids, and countless hours spent watching The Sound of Music ... it was her favourite movie... but also the only one they had.

- - - She always loved the Captain.

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Mom, as strong as you were, tender you went. We were by your side, singing songs for your heart until it was quiet. She always loved the quiet.

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We imagine the quiet was short lived, as Dad and Bobby have been looking forward to this reunion for quite some time.

A special thank you to Anjar for her dedication and care, and to the kind-hearted staff at Dom Lipa.

On behalf of myself, my brothers and sister, thank you for being here to honor our mother's memory.

We love you mami.

x

