

1911 - 2012
William John Bojey



William J. Bojey was born in Kamsack, Saskatchewan on February 28, 1911 to John and Polly Medvedoff. (Polly was a Relkoff). Not long after, the Medvedoff family was relocated to the Doukhobor colonies in Southern Alberta. While a young boy growing up in a village between Lundbreck and Cowley, the families were visited by the Doukhobor leader, Peter Lordly Verigin.

As usual during one of his visits, Peter Lordly Verigin had a line up of children to whom he was dispensing oranges as treats. As the children approached he would ask each child their name, so when the Medvedoff boys, William and his older brother John approached, he also asked their name and they said Medvedoff (Medved means “bear” in Russian). Lordly then said it can be a scary name and asked if their father was home. They replied that he was away working in another community at the time. Lordly then instructed the boys to go and tell their mother to contact their father and from that day to change their family name from Medvedoff to Bojey (God’s). That is how we have the name Bojey among the Doukhobors.

William had grown into manhood and became a well-known horse trainer and not just a horse trainer but was in great demand among local farmers as one of the best team trainers. Because he did such a great job, one farmer client gave him a beautiful black stallion as a gift. Dad fondly recalled how he and this horse – ‘became like one’. He would get emotional when he spoke of him as his best friend.

Helen Stupnikoff, a girl from the Ostrov village where Selkirk College is now situated happened to be visiting relatives in Alberta one summer - William noticed. From time to time, young men who had a specialty were sent on trips to work in the villages in BC. Bill made sure to go to the Brilliant area. William’s trips to BC carried on for a couple of summers until he and Helen decided on a more permanent

arrangement and Helen went to live with William in Alberta.

It was the depression, times were tough and there was a lot of turmoil in the Doukhobor community. William’s mother Polly died in 1930. Shortly after, the Bojeys has acquired two children, Verna and then Bill. At Easter time in 1937, to take advantage of the cheaper Easter holiday rate on the train, the Bojey family moved to BC.

William and Helen, with a couple of children, for a very short time lived in the Ostrov village with the Stupnikoffs and then found rent in Winlaw for several years. Another son, Harry was born, followed much later by daughter Elizaveta.

William, always a resourceful person, bought a small shoemaker shop and was the local shoemaker in Castlegar for a number of years. He would make the daily trip to his shoemaker business in Castlegar from the Slocan Valley. The roads were very winding and not paved, and he did this on his motorcycle – an Indian – now a famous brand.

William had to let the shoe shop go because like many other Doukhobors, he also refused to register during the National Registration – this was during the war years-in the Forties - and the leather companies and other suppliers would no longer sell him any materials.

Soon the Bojeys acquired a small farm in Winlaw and William went to work in a local Burns Lumber company operation in Passmore as a blacksmith, a skill he acquired while a young man growing up on a large Doukhobor community farm by Lundbreck, Alberta. As the industry evolved so did his job and he became a millwright/welder. He designed and built his own small tractor from scratch. William built most of his own tools such as lathes, milling machines, wool carding machines, and many small innovative items for the shop and home. He was an inventor/tinker to the last. One of his many sayings was: “If someone can

think and invent this device, surely the least you should be able to do is fix it if its broken..."

During the tumultuous Doukhobor times in the Forties and particularly the Fifties the Bojey family experienced two of their younger children taken to New Denver and then later, William, along with others, was faced with a long prison sentence in Agassiz Mountain Prison. His family, with others in a similar situation, embarked on the Great Trek to the Coast, lived in Agassiz for a time and after Williams' release they ended up living in Vancouver for a number of years during the Sixties. By then their children already had lives of their own and William and Helen enjoyed several grandchildren.

William found employment in Vancouver as a carpenter with a local company and then a painter on several large buildings in Vancouver.

In the 70's William and Helen moved back to the Kootenays and established themselves in the New Settlement area. By then William and Helen had both retired and became active in the community. Both were accomplished singers and shared their talents with family, friends and others in the community. They lived at the New Settlement until Mom Helen became ill and had to be placed in a Care Home in Nelson. Dad then moved in with daughter Elizaveta and Fred Makortoff in South Slokan in 1997 and lived with them until his health deteriorated in 2010—he was 99 years old – William, with his children came to a decision to 'let's try' the Old Folks home. So he was moved to a facility in Nelson in 2010. There he celebrated his 100th Birthday with many family and friends attending. Three month ago he celebrated his 101st birthday at Mountain Lakes Care facility again with family and friends attending.

Dad was 'with it' and lucid all this time although he was getting very frail. In the last day he took a turn and family was notified. The next day he passed over at about 5:30 AM on May 09, 2012.

He is predeceased by his mother Polly in 1930 in Cowley Alberta, his brother John in 1962, his father John in 1975, his wife Helen in 2005 (they had a marriage that lasted for over 75 years). At 101 years of

age, he had almost no old friends left - almost all had already passed on - although he did enjoy some younger friends.

He is survived by his children and their families: Verna and John Woikin; Bill and Mary Bojey; Harry and Margie Bojey; Elizaveta and Fred Makortoff; also 12 grandchildren; 27 great-grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren; several nephews and nieces and many other relatives.

William Bojey was a devout Doukhobor and his simple lifestyle betrayed a well read individual and a complex thinker. Physically he was a powerfully built, quiet man of enormous patience, compassion and wisdom. He is much loved, especially by his grand kids.

May he rest in peace in Eternal Consciousness in God's Heavenly Kingdom.

Vechnaya pamyat v tsarstviyi nebesnom.

The family wishes to extend their heartfelt gratitude to:

- The Verigin family for their special condolences and expressions of sympathy.
- The Krestova Community for the singers, cooking groups and gravediggers and all who helped.
- A great thank you for all of the wonderful Home Care people we have come to know and respect, who came to help us out with Dad when he lived with us.
- The Mountain Lakes staff and Dr. Janz. Dad was in their very capable, understanding, and loving care to the end. We remain very grateful.
- Bill Strilaeff from the Castlegar Funeral Home who adds such understanding, care and compassion when providing his professional service.
- A special thank you to Sid Malakoff for being so dependable in conducting the funeral service in a thoughtful and reverent manner.

Thank you all.



In Memoriam
Vechnaya Pamyat

Preserving the memory of our deceased family members and friends