

### 13. Saskatoon Doukhobor Youth

I had experienced Doukhobor Youth singing of Russian songs in Pelly at age about 14, the local Doukhobor Elders noted that their youth was not participating in singing and meetings. They made a decision to bring a noted singer, Harry Vereschagin, from Salmo, B.C., to assist in teaching their youth to sing. Harry had been part of the Peter Verigin (Hospoidnee) entourage (1<sup>st</sup> Doukhobor Leader in Canada) as he visited each Village, Singers with talented voices would always accompany Hospoidnee.

So, all of the Saskatchewan Doukhobor settlements were part of this effort which included Pelly, Kamsack, Veregin, Canora, Langham and Blaine Lake. I was asked if I wanted to participate.

I really never sang much and so this was quite an experience as I did not know how to read Russian, and all the song books were in Russian.

As a child, I remember sitting on my mother's lap while she sang, and her chest would resonate with song as I fell asleep in total peace and comfort. In the mid-forties, many of this "bunch" (as my mother referred to it) moved to British Columbia and I understand now that this had to do with the final foreclosure of the Christian Community of Christ (CCUB). Many of these Doukhobors were involved in leasing farms from the CCUB and / or involved in various operations of CCUB which was headquartered in Veregin. So, it follows that many of these families were still dedicated to the Union of Christian Communities of Christ (USCC) that followed the windup of CCUB. This meant that the "bunch" broke up and it was in 1947 that our family moved to Pelly which separated them further.

I grew up with that feeling of comfort and closeness that I had experienced on my mother's lap and so I was always searching for my own "bunch".

I later assisted in organizing a Pelly Youth Choir and we even organized a public concert in Pelly.

After the youth choir in Pelly and when I arrived in Saskatoon, I was alone and needed some Doukhobor companionship. So, I phoned Koozma Tarasoff as he was Editor of the Doukhobor Enquirer which was being sent out to as many of the Doukhobor families that he had addresses. After several tries, I found out that the Saskatoon Doukhobor Youth Choir (SDYC) was meeting that fateful Sunday evening on Avenue I. I took a bus there and waited outside in the cold and snow until a car arrived. That was the first time that I met Mitch Ozeroff and then all the Youth that got into the Hall. That was where I met my future wife, Marilyn Verishine.

I spent a large amount of time with the University roster looking for Doukhobor Youth, finding them and then encouraging them to attend at the SDY meetings. With the assistance of other like-minded members, we were able to attract a total of about 35 Youth who were at Saskatoon attending educational studies or working. These Youth were from Pelly, Kamsack, Veregin, Canora, Langham and Blaine Lake.

I served on the Executive and was President for two years in succession when we took a tour at Christmas 1960 with about 25 Youth to perform at Canora, Kamsack and Pelly. The tour consisted of a play and various singing presentations.

In the Spring of 1963, we entertained a large group of Youth from British Columbia at a Talent Night that was created a few years previously. This Talent Night had choirs from Pelly, Canora, Langham and Blaine Lake in addition to the SDYC. This was all a new development created by our enthusiastic and hard-working executive.

- a. See my blog at [https://elmerverigin.wordpress.com/Saskatoon Doukhobor Youth \(SDY\) a Dated Organization](https://elmerverigin.wordpress.com/Saskatoon-Doukhobor-Youth-(SDY)-a-Dated-Organization)

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