

THIS WRITER'S RESPONSE TO HIS POEM "FAITH" POSTED IN EPILOGUE

(My Journey Through a Life of Opportunity (Elmer Verigin)

Here is the original poem 'Faith' that I, Elmer Verigin, composed in 1960:

".....FAITH

In the first chapter
Of meditating thoughts
Are revealed
Uncertainty, anxiety.....
Interwoven
With dreaded unconfidence
And polluted
With external pressures
Like
Faithlessness
The cue is chosen
The words ring
Loud and clear;
Faith
What means
This word
Of Varied definition?
Faith of the divine Being?
Faith of destiny?
Or faith in oneself?
But one's self
Is faithless
When destiny
Places cat and mouse
With heartless tigers
Where does one seek
This faith?
Does he grow confident?
Of physical endurance?
Of mental superiority
And the hope of reward

For his effort?
This is faith in one's self?
Does he beg allegiance?
To divinity
And lend all his powers
To the Almighty:
Body, mind and soul
And declare himself
Saved?
This is faith in divinity?
Or is he heedless
Of the natural world
And soothes himself
With destiny
In which the result
Is always benefit
No matter what
The sign post said?
If this is faith
Then leave me no part
For I seek more
I seek glory in self scarifice
To thy neighbor
To do them
As I would have them do me
To bear no pride
Which seeds the
Grains of destruction
To seek no treasure
And accept none but love
Give me this and
Yours be the rest
I am tired and weary
Though the sound
Of the starting gun
Rings through my ears
And the hardships of

The track
Are still ahead
And the finish line
Far over yonder hill
When the race is over
And I am the winner
Give me not medal
But definition
Of faith
A present to
Mankind
A trophy
Unconquered
But a symbolic hope
This give me
And I am
A happy man

*****EW Verigin winter ???, 1960, (uncut)*****.....”

End original document

Perhaps an informational background is necessary to introduce this blog. In my twelfth year of High School, I was inspired and mentored by a very talented Educator, Peter Negraeff to enjoy writing short stories and poetry in the English class that he taught. I became prolific with many poems which writings I favored. I decided that I would file ‘drafts’ in a ‘scribbler’ in an unedited format with the idea that I wanted to get a clear sense of my feelings at the time of composing. Later in life. I thought that sometimes I would edit and publish these poems, should I feel so inspired.

The ‘scribbler’ remains as it was in the initial form in my library.

I had actually planned to take Philosophy at university and become a Writer but my favorite brother-in-law (I only had one), John Khadekin, had a MEd and a BA with a major in Psychology. He patiently mentored me to a clear understanding that all Writers and Artists are initially very hungry because their talents are not appreciated until they are much older and, in some cases, departed before their works become evaluable. He suggested that I consider the sciences and mathematics as a guide to a future career in Engineering. This was ‘echoed’ by my principal, Mr. Parks. So, it came to pass that I entered Engineering at the University of Saskatchewan at Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in the Fall of 1958.

The trials and tribulations and financial challenges that I encountered to register for the U of S, are all posted in ‘My Journey Through a Life of Opportunity’ for those Readers who may desire to read for their information.

Engineering is ignored by Arts Professors and so for part of my first year I was getting the highest-class marks in English but only average in my sciences as I was still not sure if I had made the correct decision to choose Engineering but then my English started to become weaker and the other subjects stronger as the first year unfolded.



This meant that I did not have time to write poetry but then my mental state became very confused the winter of 1960 in my second year when I started specializing in Chemical Engineering. I was not allowing myself to relax.

On a very cold stormy night (a Saskatchewan blizzard) I became really confused. As a young man, how was I going to deal with my inner doubts. I sat down and decided to write one of my last poems. I searched for a theme and 'Faith' was a fitting title to formulate my future life's perspective.

Today, August 17, 2024, I 'googled' for a definition of Faith to obtain a better understanding of its meaning, which is as follows:

".....Faith is **courage**; it is **creative** while despair is always destructive. Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark. Faithless is he that says farewell when the road darkens.

Faith is not a mere intellectual stance, but a belief that leads to action. As James 2:26 says, "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead."

Faith is one of the most central parts of our **relationship with God**. No matter who we are, no matter what our walk in life, there will be trying times for us.

Do you think faith is necessary to keep going when everything is against you?...."

To appreciate my comments now, a reading of the 1960 poem should be a requirement as I will make references as follows:

1. *"...mediating thoughts....Faith..."* it was obvious that I was very troubled and was attempting to settle myself down because I seemed to be unsure where I was and what I was doing, What was my purpose in it all?
2. *"...heartless tigers..."* somehow, I felt that there was little compassion in my world at that time
3. *"...physical endurance....mental superiority...."* I saw this as possible qualifications for rewards
4. *"...beg allegiance to divinity...."* perhaps I needed to commit myself to Christ and work in the religious field.
5. *"...and soothes himself with destiny...."* It appears that I was considering letting myself go to wherever might happen (eat drink and be merry?) as I could not see any future
6. *"...seek glory in self sacrifice....bear no pride..."* I was looking at selfless giving.
7. *"....grains of destruction..."* does not make sense here. I believe I may have been wanting a word that could mean "restructure" or "renewal". This happened 64 years ago so I am not exactly sure what I meant.
8. *"... accept none but love. Give me this and yours be the rest..."* perhaps I was not searching for financial rewards even at that difficult time, in my life.
9. *"....I am tired and weary...."* describes my confused state of mind. The Reader must understand that Engineering courses are typically 44 hours of classes and Labs every week. To succeed the students needs to contribute at least an equivalent time at home. That is 88 hours a week. No wonder some students go "squirrelly".
10. *"...hardships of the track are still ahead..."* I was fully aware that the conclusion of university was just the beginning of hardship.
11. *"....give not medal...."* I was not anticipating financial benefits.
12. *"....definition of Faith, a present to Mankind, a trophy unconquered..."* I resolved that my ambition was to apply myself to help mankind.

Did I achieve this is the original question?

Robert Frost wrote the poem "The Road Not Taken" which perhaps may be an appropriate read at this time for reference for those that maybe interested.

I will now list the opportunities that came about in the next few years following composition of this poem, that 'tested' my resolve:

- a) That 1960 year, my only source of employment was back with my two brothers (I was able to work with them every summer since 1955 as there was no income from the family farm) in the Kootenays after unsuccessful applications with a few companies as a second-year student Chemical Engineer. I received polite letters of refusal from their Human Resources Departments.



L to R: Russel Verigin, Philip Sherstobitoff, Elmer Verigin, Lawrence Verigin with daughter Patti

- b) I had a great deal of fun that summer and I even considered ceasing my university career. I was ending up the summer with insufficient funds to continue my studies. My educated brother-in-law, John Khadekin, drove out from Benito, Mb., specially to engage me in a psychological "chat" in his very professional manner. He offered to subsidize my monthly room and board to enable me to "survive". I was also able to go back and invited to move in with the Tarasoff family household with my friend Keith. I was immediately "adopted" into the family. Susan, Keith's mother was an amazing cook as compared to my previous two years of "student fare" which positively changed dramatically my personal situation, and I was part of a family again. Too well fed but much happier!

- c) I applied for summer jobs as a Third Year Chemical Engineer and a repeat of "nice" letters from various Human Resources did not seem too promising. Again, my brothers were able to give me employment as a very "rough carpenter" framing houses. We had a close family and there had been previous discussions about forming a construction company together. My older brother was initially disappointed when I had decided on Chemical Engineering rather than Civil Engineering. Obviously, I was now disillusioned in my inability to gain work experience in my chosen field and so the subject of a Verigin Construction company was revisited. A young lady friend from Saskatoon had 'mysteriously' decided to come and visit the Kootenays to continue discussions of an engagement. That pending change to my life required serious planning as to the future.



My brothers had no difficulty in revisiting those earlier discussions that could bring me into the fledgling construction company already in operation. It would require that I switch my Engineering courses to Civil Engineering and probably require an extra year at the U of S. This part of my poem 'Faith' was already coming to fruition as it did not appear that I would have a future in Chemical Engineering and all that could come with that field.

- d) In my fourth year, my load now included some second-year courses added to third year Civil Engineering courses. At registration my Chemical Engineering Head came over and was not

impressed with my changes and tried to dissuade my decision but I was resolute and continued.

Marilyn was teaching at this time in Perdue, so our time together was on weekends. We ended up getting married on December 23, 1961. For the rest of that year I was a married University student living in a rooming house owned by her Aunty Strelaeff. (Read on my blog “Naïve Operators of a Rooming House” if interested)

We returned to the Kootenays for the summer to continue working in construction with my brothers. I became aware that in order for me to achieve professional status as an Engineer, it would require working with numerous Professional Engineers for a period of not less than two years. The difficult decision for our family was that I would need to gain employment outside Verigin, to achieve this. I was not sure how I was going to do that, but I would try to resolve that once I got back to the U of S for my last year of Civil Engineering.

- e) Marilyn’s Aunty, Owner of the Rooming House, offered us a job to look after her House as “Custodians” over five (5) Renters. This would reduce our rent and allow us to live in her quarters as we now had a daughter Nona in our family. We needed all the financial support we could get so the decision was easy to make. We would do it. Once the blog story about the Rooming House is read, an appreciation of the practical Psychology courses Marilyn and I had naively agreed to accept.
- f) Potential Employers visited the U of S starting October and were always interested in hiring potential candidates for their operations upon graduation in the Spring. I decided to investigate the possibility of finding an Employer to meet my requirement for work experience as a Professional Engineer for two years as required by Professional Engineering Associations. I completed two applications and appeared for interviews with a Pulp Producer and a Chemical Plant. I received job offers from both which surprised me. The interviewers seemed to be very interested in my Chemical Engineering Courses as well as my coming Civil Engineering Degree completion. They were also happy to hear about my construction work experience.

Decision time. Do we go to Ontario or British Columbia? I really had no idea what I would be doing in either offer so that I would have the practical Engineering training that I required. Columbia Cellulose Company Limited offered a position in Castlegar or in Prince Rupert. Since this was intended to be a two year employment and we knew all about Castlegar, Marilyn and I decided on Prince Rupert so that I could get exposure operating in an unfamiliar area with people I did not know. We would also get to see more of British Columbia and the Northwest Pacific Coastline. I accepted the Columbia Cellulose offer and declined the other.

This was Job offers one and two.

These were my first formal job offers in my life!

Part of the basic plan was set, and I now could get back to my studies in earnest.

- g) I chose a graduating thesis on Construction Project Estimating. Since I was going to a Construction Contractor, I might as well start preparing for that eventuality as estimating would be a primary basis of our success. I decided to interview four (4) Saskatoon Building Contractors and see if they would share their practical knowledge for my thesis purposes. I also loaned Estimating publications from the University Library. My least expectation was that one of the Contractors would offer me employment after three (3) interviews of his company estimating procedures.

I had to politely decline the generous job offer as I had already accepted one and after all, there were no Engineers in his firm. I shared with him the plan that I was to form a Construction Company with my brothers in British Columbia.

This was job offer number three.

- h) In late February 1963, I received a message from my Sanitary Engineering Professor to see him in his office. This was an unusual request as I had not heard of Professors calling students into their office. This only happened in Public Schools. What have I done?

We started the meeting with my apology that I never answered the first question on his recent exam. I am sorry but my mind went blank, and I could not remember the simple formula that was to be quantified like a simple Algebra question, but I did answer the rest of the exam that required creating a solution from a set of site issues. "I just ran out of time and an Engineer should never memorize formulas as that is why Handbooks and Slide Rules have been created." His answer "you are correct!"

Then he went on to say that I had been chosen as a successful candidate to receive a scholarship and study for a master's degree in Sanitary Engineering. I would be required to teach university courses as a paid Instructor while I took the master's courses. Obviously, this literally knocked me right off my feet because I was not a straight A student. After a few minutes of shock, I then asked for time to think this over. You have three (3) days he offered.

Marilyn and I mulled this over with her opting to say, "it is your decision as it is your career". All the facts were listed by me:

- 1) I had already committed myself to a job.
- 2) I also committed myself to a family enterprise after two years in that job.
- 3) I understood that pollution was a World Problem and that once I started my research, it would likely lead to further studies for a Doctorate. This would mean that our family enterprise would not materialize. "Is family blood thicker than water?"
- 4) I enjoyed singing with Doukhobors. This would likely take me away from Doukhobor settlements
- 5) This would certainly not be commensurate with my philosophy as stated in my poem "Faith". It did meet the assistance to people portion, though.
- 6) I went back to my professor and asked if this offer would be open to me, two years after I received my professional Engineering status.
- 7) The Professor's answer was stern: "I will never see you again if I let you walk out this door.
- 8) I decided to go to Prince Rupert

- 9) In that early part of my life and career, I never realized that offers like the one from the University of Saskatchewan are akin to winning a major lottery.

My love of family, (my brothers) was surreal.

This was job offer number four (a major and life-changing potential)

- i) My position at Columbia Cellulose Co. Ltd., I was a Project Engineer, and I was responsible for all the new construction that took place at the plant. I enjoyed it very much as I became familiar with the production of Acetate and Sulfite Pulps and the equipment necessary to manufacture them.

There were many Consultants and Suppliers that visited the Plant in Prince Rupert and Pulp Production was not a secret with discussions of methods and workers being openly discussed.

I also received an offer from a Pulp Mill in Prince George job-offer number five (5).

I received a job offer from Stebbins Engineering, a refractory lining contractor for job offer number six (6).

Four months short of my two-year time, I was advised that I would be promoted to **Assistant Project Manager on the construction of a Sulfate Pulp Mill** adjacent to the existing Sulfite Mill. **Job offer number seven (7)**. After two months, I shared my intent to leave Prince Rupert to start the Verigin Family Construction Company. There were offers of more money and fringe benefits, but I was resolute to continue with my original plan.

I was able to complete the requirements for a Professional Engineer and was accepted into the British Columbia Association.

- j) I knew that I would need to understand how Architects conduct their profession when the Verigins got into the Construction Business. I took walks to downtown Prince Rupert, I noticed a sign on a door going upstairs over a store which identified a new office for Alex Inselberg, Architect. The second time I walked by, I decided to talk this person to see if I could assist him in any way and not necessarily a paid position. He was reluctant at first but then gave me a project rejection letter from the Building Inspector I was able to gain approval of that project, Alex had designed. He was convinced he needed someone like me, and I started working with him. He also said that he wanted to pay me which is always great. When I announced that I was leaving the community, he offered me a partnership in his practice as an Engineer. Again, I needed to explain my situation, that I was joining my brothers in a construction enterprise.

This was job offer number eight (8)

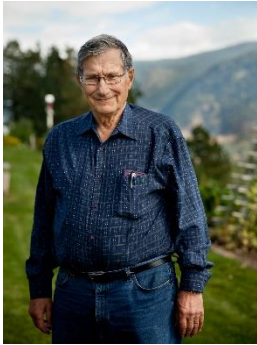
- k) Wynn Stothert, the General Manager of the Sulfite Mill decided that he was going to organize a Design, Build and Commission Pulp Mills and related operations just after I left Prince Rupert. He sent Adolph Steigleder, the senior Project Engineer at the Pulp Mill to Castlegar to offer me a job as a Senior Project Manager. Adolph was disappointed that I

chose building houses with my brothers rather than accept this position with this new company.

Job offer number nine (9)

l) I choose my original intent as **Job number ten (10) with Verigin Industries Limited**

At this time, it is difficult to read the poem 'Faith' where I expressed a young man's frustrations in deciding where his destiny should be in 1960 and now after sixty-four (64) years, I think it is fair to say my life history compares favourably with what I predicted and finally desired to do.



Those that read fairy tales, where boy meets girl, they fall in love and live happily ever after, are known to be just that: a fairy tale. In real life, events take place that challenge a couple, and some find that separation is a solution. In my instance, I have now spent over sixty-three (63) years with Marilyn. We have had our share of trials and tribulations, but we have raised three (3) daughters and one (1) son. They, in turn, have honored us with ten (10) grandchildren and now eight (8) great grandchildren. The final pathway and career that I chose is insignificant to the love and happiness our family activity shared with our blood family as well as all the partners that the family chose to bring "into the fold".

They all follow the principle that "hard work" results in a "good life". They all hold mostly very responsible positions in their respective careers. Perhaps Marilyn and I set the correct example?

I spent over thirty (30) years in the construction business with my brothers and in the end, we were still able to sit down and enjoy a chat over a glass of wine. We were able to accumulate houses, cars and personal possession but we were more ***"richer in love than in financial wealth."***

The achievements and projects that we left are all listed in my blog "My Journey Through a Life of Opportunity". It is available to those that choose to search my blog and access those stories. I was also able donate my knowledge and effort to the many "not for profit projects" which are also listed there.

My thirty (30) years in Rotary Clubs in branches located in Trail, Vancouver, New Westminster, North Delta and finally retiring in Castlegar, were influential to me by

**"...THE FOUR WAY TEST:
of the things that you say or do**

- 1) Is it the TRUTH?**
- 2) Is it FAIR to all concerned?**
- 3) Will it BUILD GOOD WILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?**
- 4) Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?..."**

To the best of my knowledge and ability, I followed this excellent international Rotary objective in all that I became involved.

Marilyn and I are blessed with four (4) children. We were able to raise them by never 'dictating' the way they should live nor the partners that they may choose. We did travel as a full family to Europe and the Mediterranean in 1980 for five (5) weeks. Together we experienced cultures and ways of life of many people to further understand our World. In 2011, our entire family travelled to Mazatlán, Mexico, to celebrate Marilyn and my fiftieth (50th) Wedding Anniversary. We also travelled together every Summer to visit relatives in Saskatchewan. Travelling as a family is a 'bonding' experience albeit trying at times. All our children have responsible careers where they administrate people. Our grandchildren, all have great careers.

Marilyn and I are very proud of all.

Did I make the correct career decisions? I am now a proud parent of four (4), grandparent of ten (10) and great grandparent of eight (8). Happiness is in a healthy and loving family.

I believe that where there is Love, there is God.

I am the last one in my birth family left to write this story. It is not being written for glory of any description but only to illustrate a comparison sequel to my poem in 1960 which I named "Faith".

Written August 22, 2024, by EWV
Edits by Marilyn Verigin, August 24, 2024
Posted by EWV, August 24, 2024