

This is How I Knew William J. (Bill) Voykin



I always knew this man as Bill since about 1970, but he had already been on this planet for 40 years.

Not only did I meet him, but also his wife and partner Natalie. There was an immediate warmth and mutual acceptance that we enjoyed for 54 years.

Bill and Nat were Founders of the Doukhobour Cultural Association (DCA) with about 15 other Doukhobor families from the original three (3) parent Doukhobor Societies in a three-way 1971 distribution. We became an innocent association of different understandings, but the intent was to work together as one.

The DCA existed as an unregistered society for 44 years.

Bill and Nat were synonymous with the volunteer ethic. No matter what effort was an objective, they were usually the first to raise their hands to support and provide strength to the objective.

Voykins were well read in many philosophies which helped them understand the Doukhobor way of life. DCA researched Doukhobor understandings, then was able to organize symposiums and seminars to include the public.

DCA decided to construct the first Baunya portion of the Doukhobor Discovery Center as a test project to determine how well the members could work together. Bill was a faithful participant with others to complete same.

An idea to organize a Doukhobor Sports Day at Campbell Field in South Slokan was enthusiastically supported with Bill demonstrating his culinary skills in creating Peace Burgers and assisting with events such as Sunflower Spitting to Ladies Plow Pulling contests and others to appreciative crowds. Proceeds were donated to worthy causes.



Assistance with Doukhobor Seniors Projects undertaken by the Doukhobor Benevolent Society in their quest, a ten (10) unit Rosewood Manor in Castlegar, was the DCA contribution. The DCA firstly took a bus trip and toured seniors projects in the Okanagan to familiarise themselves with this type of housing. The Voykins contributed to the creation of the facility as well as 25 years of operation as seniors

housing to the community at large until the 25-year loan was retired.

DCA members took turns in administration of DCA. Bill was a very capable president as well as other executive positions when it was his turn.

A decision was reached to take a bus trip to visit Doukhobor communities of Saskatoon and Veregin Saskatchewan. Bill joined the DCA Unchoir as we nicknamed ourselves. Again, it was an opportunity to expand an understanding of the Doukhobor Family.

Bill, Nat and many members in the DCA aspired to communal living, having lived in that fashion in their youth. With some encouragement from the late Pete Oglow who was a trustee for the Blahadatniya (Champion Creek) CCUB Land Settlement, it was decided to undertake a comprehensive study into the feasibility of developing a parcel of approximate 900 acres into a viable agricultural communal project for the Doukhobor community at large.

Field trips were taken to Hutterite communities in the Crowsnest area to understand what was necessary achieve and perhaps duplicate their success. Discussions also took place with the Provincial Agricultural Offices in Creston as well as Cominco on soils contamination issues. Various committees were formed and after two years a detailed report was submitted to the USCC.

Two USCC Directors met with the DCA and advised that the USCC was not interested and so the report was filed.



Bill and Nat also joined a group of explorers that undertook trips into the wilderness. Some of these places included an attempt to revive the historic Green City some 24 kilometers along a logging road North of Erie Creek just off Highway 3 A and 6 kilometers South of Salmo, B.C. Bill was an amazing scout in the woods. He also participated in searches for mystery prizes.

Perhaps the most ambitious project that DCA undertook was the creation of Whatshan Lake Retreat. DCA decided that they should tour Summer Camps on Vancouver Island as part of establishing an understanding of this type of project. Bill had no difficulty agreeing to guarantee a loan of \$150,000 with 12 other families so that the property could be purchased in the initial phase and then became a faithful volunteer throughout the construction of the Retreat and ancillary Buildings at Whatshan Lake as the Doukhobour Heritage Retreat Society #1999. Bill became a concrete finisher, carpenter as well as every other trade that was required to create the project. Bill's legacy was procurement of the Quartz rock from Crawford Bay and lay the stone to create a beautiful fireplace as a centerpiece within the



Retreat Building.



An eventual maturity desire of Bill and Nat was to be part of a DCA effort to establish a composite Seniors Project with the founding of Kootenay Columbia Seniors Housing Cooperative at Grandview in Castlegar, B.C. Experience in serving on committees stimulated Bill to be an active and positive voice in the design, planning and construction on sixty (60) acres that was purchased for this purpose. A legacy enjoyed by 49 senior families today.

The Voykins supported a DCA \$50,000 Feasibility Study donation to create the Grandview Project. This included a Planning Seminar at Blue Lake in the East Kootenay.

Bill and Nat were one of the first families to commit to construction of a 1,000 square foot Bungalow as one of the families that were able to become part of the first phase of development. This is the way I knew Bill and the Voykin Family.

In summary, I will say that Bill enjoyed discussion and debates but once a decision had been made, he immediately implemented planning and action to complete that decision. No time was wasted in listing reasons why something could not be done but all the effort was to get it done in the least amount of time.

That is how I remember Bill Voykin.

Rest in Peace my friend.

Composed by EWV September 29, 2024

Reviewed by Paris Voykin September 29, 2024

Edited by EWV September 30, 2024

Edited again October 02, 2024

Read at CoL October 05, 2024

Posted October 05, 2024