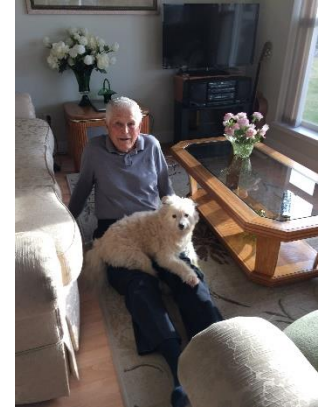


# ANOTHER FRIEND, FRED CHURSINOFF

(Passed away May 10, 2026)

Fred's grandfather, Peter Nikalivich Chursinoff was a brother to my grandmother, Auxuta Nikalinova Verigin and so we were closely related. We did not know that when we first met socially in the Kootenays, already with families.



## 1. Social Friendship

When Marilyn and I settled in Castlegar in the Summer of 1965, we got to know many Doukhobor friends that had similar interests as us, Fred and Ann became part of that group that socialized and held serious discussions as well as partied and generally enjoyed each other's company. Nobody was affluent but everybody was very hospitable. All our possessions were what we needed and could afford and so none felt inferior. We looked forward to the next opportunity to get together.

Social gatherings always included singing Russian Cultural songs which were inherited from our upbringing and the culture that our parents passed on to us from the how they had enjoyed their neighbours and friends. Fred played his accordion and had a great accompanying voice as did his partner Ann. Others played guitars with participation coming naturally and required little encouragement for the entire gang to be singing and enjoying each other.

## 2. Doukhobor Cultural Association (DCA)

Our religious upbringing naturally involved discussing our Doukhobor Roots. Our Doukhobor base was fractured at that time with some of our parents belonging to three (3) separate groups of Doukhobor understanding. Our overwhelming enjoyment of each other overcame our parents needs to disagree on religious philosophy.

In the late 1960s. Fred and Ann became the base of the need to form a serious 'Discussion Group' to delve deeply into our Doukhobor History. To this end, many others came to join us in these discussions so that we named ourselves the Doukhobor Cultural Association (DCA). This association seemed to attract participants from the three senior registered groups in an equal three-way setting so that information was shared in a positive way. We took yearly obligations to serve on the executive with Fred doing a wonderful service when it was his turn.

The DCA in turn was the base organization for many other Doukhobor efforts that ensued.

## 3. Bus trip to Saskatchewan

Doukhobor History in Canada involved the migration of 7,400 Doukhobors from Georgia to Saskatchewan, Canada in 1899. That further involved some 4,000 of those original migrants relocating to the Kootenays in British Columbia after disagreement of the original memorandum of understanding with the Canadian Government. Some members of the DCA decided that a visitation with the people in Saskatchewan would increase our mutual understanding of Doukhobors as well as be enjoyable.

Fred and his accordion soon became the musical entertainment along with others and their guitars with singing in Russian and English, filling the bus with joyful sound. Since none of us belonged to an organized Doukhobor Choir but we knew that our hosts would request us to sing, we named ourselves the UNCHOIR which was basically true and we were 'smug' about that. Fred and his great voice enriched our effort.

We could not afford motel stops and so slept in our seats until reaching Saskatoon where families invited us to stay with them which is a great cultural habit. This practice was repeated in Veregin. The entire trip home was within the bus.

#### **4. Whatshan Lake Retreat**

In 1981, a property surrounding Whatshan Lake near Edgewood was advertised as an estate sale. An investigation committee was curious and explored the site of two parcels, a 204-acre and a 5-acre forested, pristine properties. The DCA discussion was centered on a project that we could develop for Youth albeit we did not have anything specific in mind at that time.

The Loggers in our group suggested that selective logging of part of the timber would enable us to support an offer to purchase; however, we would need a loan to complete the purchase prior to logging. The \$150,000 offer was secured by a loan that was personally guaranteed by at least ten (10) members of the DCA of which included Fred and Ann. Fred participated in logging the property with Walter Demoskoff on a volunteer basis. The result was enough earnings to retire the loan and provide some needed start up funds for the Retreat construction.

When a Building Permit fee on \$1,400 was necessary, Fred was part of the seven (7) DCA members who donated \$200 each to execute the Permit. Fred and Ann participated in the Prayer Ceremony that took place over the center of the Retreat to be located in the forest.

Construction of the Retreat Building was again, a volunteer effort. Fred was one of the DCA volunteers that topped the volunteer hours with his various skills like truck-driving, electrical wiring the Retreat, Carpentry and completing the fireplace chimney above the roof with Larry Sapriken, a feat that the rest of the volunteers were unable to safely perform.

#### **5. Champion Creek Community Research Project**

The DCA was encouraged by Pete Oglow to investigate a 'community project' for the 900-acre original Christian Community of Universal Brotherhood (CCUB) lands for which he became a

Trustee in the early 1960s upon return of the lands from the Government of British Columbia originally seized upon bankruptcy of CCUB in 1939.

The DCA organized committees, researched and created a diversified and detailed 'community plan' that could be undertaken by those Doukhobors who desired to do so. Fred worked tirelessly on this project which was ultimately submitted to the subsequent owners, the Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ (USCC).

The USCC Directors chose not to consider this plan.

## **6. Fred and his flying experience**

One evening Fred showed up at our house with a roll of drawings under his arm and asked me if I would teach him how to read prints. Upon opening the roll, I realized it was a design for an airplane. I exclaimed, in surprise, "I can hardly understand them and are you planning to build a plane?"

"Once you explain the drawings, I will start", he answered confidentially.

Then I countered with "but you don't have a Pilot's License so how are you going to fly it?"

"I intend to build and fly that plane," was his confident answer.

And so, it all took place as he planned, He used it to fly to one of the Power Dam projects he was working on in Revelstoke many times. He also hired Ann as his capable Map Reader, and they flew together to many locations including the USA.

Once he convinced me to fly with him while I was under the influence of Alcohol at a party. I tried to talk my way out of it when I sobered up but I finally agreed but only once. Yes, I was scared but Fred knew what he was doing.

That was Fred, whatever he set his mind to, he would do!

## **7. Grandview Seniors Housing**

The DCA members were aging, and so discussions began regarding seniors' homes so that they could age in place with friends. Sites were investigated and the current site selected. Again, Fred and Ann became the forefront of thirty-nine (39) ground floor units to be the first project and advanced \$40,000 as 'start-up' funding that was required. The unit they purchased remained their residence from 2009 till now.

## **8. Discussions in our latter years**

Walking around Grandview is normal practice for all residents as if was for Fred and I. We met each other and of course there was reasons to share our health issues and reminisce about

former days and our friends that had already passed on. Fred's vitality lessened as the days went by and he was ready to follow our friends in our discussions.

Rest in Peace my Friend. Knowing you was a pleasure.

Elmer Verigin

*Posted in my Blog May 18, 2026*