

date not known

VERA RAGOSIN

All of us pray for the blessing of long life but to see not only your grandchildren, but your great-grandchildren grow to maturity is a wish few of us are granted.

Vera Ragosin was granted that blessing. She lived - kenahora - 96 years and was blessed to have known the love of 3 generations who adored her.

Nathan characterizes his mom as a "strong willed woman". Perhaps what validates that description most was her attitude towards age to which she refused to capitulate.

Mildred relates that only a few days ago in the hospital Vera, in a moment of pain, confided to her nurse "I'm 90" she said, " It's time to go".

The nurse, perhaps looking at her chart, gently corrected her " You're 96", she said.

Retorted Vera "Oh no! I'm not that old!"

Indeed, as she reached, what we call "the senior years" it seems that whatever age she was - her strong will assured both herself and those who loved her that "she wasn't really that old".

Esther recalls that her granny was never really ill; that she was always up and going.

She maintained her own place into her 90's - cooking meals, taking frequent 2 way walks downtown to meet friends; travelling to Hawaii and elsewhere well into her 80's - even travelling to Israel at the age of 91 to visit her grandson David and his family.

Vera's strong will didn't begin at the age of 90. Her beginning in North America shows a young woman with great courage.

At the age of 18 she came on a trip to visit relatives. It was supposed to be a 2-way trip but world politics and war put an end to the possibilities of return.

It took a strong-willed woman to be able to flourish at so at so young an age in a foreign land where a foreign language was spoken.

But persevere she did. She became truly acculturated. She did go back to visit her family in 1933, but by then she was truly a child of her adopted land. Perhaps it was for that reason that Nathan recalls that Mom and Dad rarely spoke Russian at home.

She met her husband Louis and married him in 1917. They had 47 happy years together. They worked together to build a life for their son. They gave strength to one another against the tragic death - at age 6 - of a daughter.

Together, they built a new life in a new land; migrating from the US to Wetaskiwin to Edmonton. Together they shared joy and sorrow.

Together they travelled - went to symphony and educated their son.

Once again it took a woman of strong will to build a new life for herself after the death of her husband - Louis died in 1964.

For some women that could have been a sentence of 28 years of grieving and widowhood, but Vera was strong-willed enough to go beyond her grieving and continue to lead a fulfilled life.

She became the matriarch of her family. Esther recalls her as "the queen mother sitting on a throne at her wedding". She even dressed the part - always stylish - always regal. Mildred recalls how family oriented she was - making her famous strawberry birthday cake.

Esther remembers how granny "would spoil us by coming back from her travels and bringing back the most fancy things".

Paula recalls granny singing lullabies to her. When she was too old for lullabies, they would go downtown and have tea. But whatever age she was - there was always a treat from granny, be it the secretive gift of a \$10.00 bill or the candy she hid away in her candy dishes at Canterbury Court.

She was also deeply connected with her people. Even in Wetaskiwin not particularly a Jewish Mecca - She led a Hadassah group for Jewish women from surrounding communities.

Nathan recalls her working for the Hadassah Bazaar - rolling out the cabbage rolls.

She was in charge of the gift shop at Beth Shalom Sisterhood and once she came to Edmonton - a frequent participant at religious services - at Canterbury Court she regularly attended all services provided.

As an active member of Hadassah - she must have been particularly proud that her grandson David settled in Israel.

Vera Ragosin lived a long fulfilled life. Her strength of will was her ability to pass each of life's stages and still have the will to grow and persevere.

Those who love her realize that her death is not a tragedy. Today we celebrate her life as much as we mourn her death. We admire her strength as much as we are saddened by that ultimate destruction of even the strongest of people.

And finally we pray for just a little bit of that strength of will that will allow us to go beyond our grief to a point where we too can hope for the blessings she achieved.