



REMEMBERING Maria Quiring

August 12, 1925 - June 2, 2023



Our beloved mother, Maria Quiring, was born in Fürstenweder, Ukraine, on August 12, 1925, to Jakob and Nelly Rogalsky. She was the third of five children in the family; one sister died as a toddler. Maria remembered the early years of life as being very challenging as they lived in great poverty and often there was not enough food to eat. In 1929 the family sold their house in Fürstenwerder and tried to emigrate to Canada, but the borders were closed before they could do so. They could not afford to buy a house in Fürstenwerder again, so they moved to an old, dilapidated house in Hamberg (Ukraine), where they were part of a collective farm.

One of Maria's earliest memories is that she enjoyed playing with dolls. Sadly, dolls were hard to come by during those times; happily, she had a creative mother! Her mother had obtained a cracked porcelain doll's head which she repaired using bread dough and then added a fabric body. However, the cat which they had to keep mice under control liked to gnaw on the dough!

At age 8, in 1933, Maria started attending the village school, which went up to grade 4. These were the hunger years and there were many cases of malaria, which Maria also had. In 1936 the family moved to Gnadenheim which had a high school, so the children could continue studying.

In 1941 the war came to their part of the world. Her father had been sent to work elsewhere, and during one two-month period they didn't know if he was alive or dead. Maria's older brother had been sent to a labor camp in Kazakstan, and the family was to be sent to Siberia in the fall. However, the front caught up with them before the forced evacuation took place and they stayed in their village for the time being under German occupation. Her father returned home, but both parents often worked long days away from home, leaving Maria and her younger brother home alone while bombs dropped around them. It was a frightening time.

On June 14, 1943, Maria was baptized in the river near Wernersdorf, Ukraine. Baptisms usually only took place once a year and it was a very special occasion. At about that time, with the changes in the war, they knew that they would soon need to flee. Preparations included butchering animals and lancing an abscess on Maria's foot! Then they began the Great Trek to the Polish border. Her mother and two of the siblings left earlier, and Maria and her father left a month later, driving wagons and walking almost to the Polish border, arriving December 14, and staying until March of 1944. Then they were loaded onto trains and taken to Wartegau, Poland. There the refugees were farmed out to villages and farms to work; Maria got some basic training in nursing, cooking and even teaching so that she could be put to work.

At the end of January 1945, the advancing Soviet army reached their location, and in June of that year they were sent back by train to the USSR. Conditions on the trains were terrible, extremely overcrowded and with little or no food. Sometimes a train car would be left sitting on a sidetrack for a month with no supplies except what they could scavenge in the area. Sometimes the trains were so crowded that they traveled on the roof. Attaching haphazardly to one train and then another, they reached the outskirts of Dushanbe in October of 1945.

The next few years continued to be very difficult, as they did hard manual labor, living in very crowded quarters shared with a number of families in one room. In 1946 Maria got tuberculosis in her back, eventually spending 1.5 years flat in bed. Afterwards she had to wear a leather corset and use crutches until her muscles regained some strength. Maria's back continued to be a health concern for the rest of her life. In 1950 she was able to get a job as a receptionist in a medical office; after completing her nurses training in the evenings, she worked at the clinic for the next 20 years. This was an excellent career for her as she was a natural caregiver, helping those with medical needs at the clinic and in the neighbourhood, if they were unable to access the clinic. She had a genuine interest in people and showed them that she cared.

In the spring of 1957 Maria met Ernst Quiring in the church youth group and they were married in August of that year. They bought a small house which needed considerable renovation, which they did in their spare time. Here they welcomed and raised their four children - Eduard in 1958, Walter in 1960, Nellie in 1964 and Annette in 1965. Maria's mother lived with them and helped with child care as Maria and Ernst both worked full time. Their hard work paid off - they raised pigs and chickens, had fruit trees and grapes and lived relatively well.

Maria's eldest sister, Nellie, had been separated from the family during the war and managed to reach Germany ahead of the Soviet occupation. From there she came to Canada after the war and worked tirelessly to bring the Quiring family here as well. Her effort paid off in 1972 as we were given permission to emigrate. This was very difficult for Maria and Ernst; very few people left the Soviet Union at that time, and they did not know if they would ever see their remaining siblings again. They wanted us all to look proper when we got to Canada, so they bought nice jackets for us. When we got here and finally drank milk and had good food, we grew so fast that all our clothes quickly became too small. We never wore those jackets!

However, it was a happy reunion with Tante Nellie, and life took a considerable upswing.

The family settled in Vancouver, attending Culloden MB Church and participating in various ministries such as the seniors' choir, ladies club and serving as deacons. They offered hospitality to many and made numerous good friends. Maria cleaned houses to help make ends meet. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1990 meant that relatives emigrated from there to Germany, and Maria and Ernst were able to make numerous trips to Germany to visit them.

After retirement and with the children out of the house, life slowed down a bit and this was probably the most relaxing part of their lives. They were delighted to have grandchildren entering their world: Jacqueline, Leandra and Bradley brought them much joy! In 1991 they sold their house in Vancouver and moved to Abbotsford, joining King Road MB Church. Maria's creativity shone through in her baking, crocheting and knitting, and she very much appreciated participating in the Frauenverein at church. They were able to enjoy numerous short trips just for the fun of it, including Hawaii, Canada's East Coast and Barkerville, along with more trips to Germany. There were many family meals, visits with friends and walks around Mill Lake.

Failing health finally made the move into assisted living necessary, and in 2015 they moved into Tabor Court, where she lived for almost eight years. As they were no longer able to get to church, the broadcasts from Clearbrook MB Church were a special gift and great blessing to them. Maria was lonely after Ernst's passing in 2022 and was very ready to meet her Saviour and see so many loved ones again. She entered the hospital on May 22 and passed away on June 2 after a hard fight with pneumonia.

Maria is predeceased by Ernst, siblings Nellie, Katherina, Johann and wife Lena, and Jakob and wife Anna. She is survived by children Ed (Michele), Walter (Maryanne), Nellie and Annette (Peter), as well as grandchildren Jacqueline, Leandra (Ryan) and Brad (Sarah) with their families.

We will miss her greatly.

