



## REMEMBERING Rita Wiens

April 6, 1928 - January 4, 2023



Margarita, always known as Rita, was born in Alexanderwohl, Ukraine, April 06, 1928. Her parents were Gerhard and Elizebeth Peters. Rita's mother died December 29, 1929. Her father then married Rita's mother's twin sister, Tina on April 06, 1930. Three more children were added to this family: Kaethe, Daniel, and Elizebeth. Rita went to grade school in Alexanderwohl, and then one year of high school in Gnadenheim. Her father was sent away to Siberia by the Russians in September 1941, never to be seen again. Rita, being the eldest, was able to help her mother with the daily duties. During 1942 - 1943, the Germans occupied the area and life was relatively peaceful. However, in September 1943 the Great Trek began to the west to flee the Russians. In January 1944, Rita and family arrived in Poland. There they worked with the Polish people for one year. Then again, they had to flee the oncoming Russian army, but were overtaken and sent back to the town in Poland where they had been for a year. The Polish officials wanted to rid themselves of the German Mennonites and loaded them onto a flatbed rail car and sent them on to eastern Germany. There again, they stayed about another year with Rita doing housework. Information was given to Rita about a refugee camp in Gronau, West Germany. Address in hand, with help and a few cigarettes for bribing, she was able to cross to West Germany at night through a forest. There Rita located the MCC Camp for refugees. The rest of the family followed a week later with the help of MCC workers and again the valuable cigarettes. Rita always had special memories of her time in Gronau. She worked in the kitchen, made many life long friends and enjoyed evenings socializing. After so many years of turmoil Gronau was a place of refuge. September 1948, the family left for Canada by ship, arriving in Halifax and then by train to Winnipeg, their final destination. Shortly after their arrival, Rita began to work for the wealthy Kennedy family and stayed there three years. She then spent one summer working in Ontario. During her time in Winnipeg, she was baptised, having previously accepted Christ as her

personal Saviour. Rita met Jacob Wiens when he was billeted in Rita's home while he was attending a church conference in Winnipeg. Rita and Jacob were married the following year March 21, 1953. The honeymoon drive home to Yarrow was accompanied by his mother, sister Mary and aunt Susan (very romantic). In the following years they were blessed with four children: Harry, Marlene, John and Edward. Rita's life consisted of looking after the family, baking and gardening. She also was a big support to Jacob during haying season. Meals were made for the workers along with sandwiches and doughnuts for coffee breaks. If you fed the workers well, they would always be there when needed. Rita rarely worked in the barns. As the children got older, Rita became more involved in church activities. The ladies' group became very important to her. Rita was well known for her delicious paska and danish pastries sold at bake sales. June 07, 1982, Jacob passed away suddenly as a result of a farming accident. At that time Rita and Jacob were also building their retirement home. It was completed but Rita moved in by herself. Rita's focus now became her grandchildren, with six of them living very close to her. Rita often mentioned moving to Abbotsford, and in October 1993, she moved into the Wedgewood condominium in Clearbrook. This was when Rita began to work outside the home. She worked two days a week at the MCC Quilters and three days at Garden Park in the kitchen. She thoroughly enjoyed her volunteer work. This work continued until May 2005, when she suffered a major stroke. She managed to recover quite well but she would never work in the kitchen again. Her hands were also not steady enough to work as a quilter. Rita took opportunities to travel. She went to the east coast, to Russia several times, to Hawaii, to Alaska, and to Florida. She also travelled a few times to California to visit Harry and his family. Rita was so devastated when, in 1996, her son John died at age 38. She carried him in her heart as long as she lived. Some of Rita's loves were tending roses, beautiful clothing, nice shoes and having her hair done. The clothes and hair remained to the end, but her shoes had to go because her feet were so crippled. Rita's faith was very evident through out her life. She prayed for her children, and later her grandchildren and great grandchildren by name right to the end of her life. The hymn she sang regularly during devotions was "So nimm den meine Hande" (Take thou my hand, o Father). In 2016, Rita moved into Tabor Court. Several years later, she was moved to Tabor Home, where she resided until January 04, 2023. God granted Rita her wish of passing in her sleep. She never complained about her lot in life, especially during Covid, when she spent months in isolation. She was always thankful for the care she was receiving. The family would like to thank the staff at Tabor Home for their kindness and love towards Rita. Rita is predeceased by her husband Jacob, and son John. She leaves to mourn three children: Harry, Marlene (Edward) Becker and Edward (Lee Ann), 12 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren. Mom, we love you dearly and you will always be in our hearts.

A memorial service for Rita will be held Wednesday, January 11, 2023 at 2:00PM at Clearbrook MB Church, 2719 Clearbrook Road, Abbotsford, B.C. V2T 2Y9. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Mennonite Central Committee Canada.

