

## **LIVES WELL & RICHLIY LIVED IN THE SERVICE OF OTHERS**

### **My recollections of Dewey Henry Gorius and Elsie Viola Gorius (nee Schwartz) by D. Kim Gorius (granddaughter)**

Dewey Gorius, son of George and Leticia Gorius (nee Moss) of R.M. Stonehenge #73 married Elsie Viola Schwartz in Moose Jaw on December 29, 1929. Elsie was the daughter of William Frederick and Mary Ellen Schwartz (nee Nesbitt) also of R.M. Stonehenge #73.

Dewey was born in Pliney, Aitken County, Minnesota and still recalled the sod shanty where he lived with his six siblings. His brother, Pliney, was closest in age and they did everything together including playing music, Dewey on violin and Pliney on guitar. In 1907, his father, George, headed to Congress, Saskatchewan to purchase and prepare a homestead and in 1911, when Dewey was 12, the family finally settled into their permanent home in Saskatchewan.

Elsie spent most of her life around Assiniboia. She wrote her Grade 8 examinations and took her first year of high school in the 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue school. She worked as a domestic for many people around Assiniboia. In 1927 she worked for the McBean Butterfly Sop for \$50.00 a month crafting beautiful trays with real butterflies inlaid in glass. She was also a proficient egg-candler with the ability to hold three eggs in her hand at once. In later life she attributed her egg candling days to her sometimes painful arthritis.

After they were married, they lived on the George Gorius (Dewey's father) farm from 1929 to 1937 where they welcomed their only child, Delmar Dewey born in 1932. A previous pregnancy had ended prematurely when Elsie contracted typhoid fever while working as a domestic caregiver. Her mother, Mary Ellen Schwartz stayed at the farm and nursed Elsie back from the brink of death over many long months.

Dewey and Elsie moved to Assiniboia in 1937 when Dewey was 38 years of age. A granary from the farm was moved to #305 – 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue East and converted into a home, albeit a chilly one. In winter, several inches of heavy frost would collect inside the attic where Delmar's bedroom was located.

Dewey worked for the Assiniboia Flour Mill, operated by Mike Cojacar. In 1947, he started working for Saskatchewan Department of Highways driving a road grader and he retired in 1964 just two years before the Canada Pension Plan came into effect in 1966. The family often recalled he took peanut butter and strawberry sandwiches to work every day for the 17 years he worked on the highways and Dewey always smiled and said that's why he lived to be 90!

Elsie and Dewey were very involved in local politics first with the CCF and then the NDP. They were also staunch supporters of the Assiniboia Cooperative Guild and Elsie was a member of the Willing Workers as well as a member of the Assiniboia Hospital Auxiliary.

Elsie was a woman ahead of her time in some regards. Although she kept a respectable home and was considered a very good cook, her passion lay in politics and campaigning for the rights of the working family. Soon she was travelling the southern part of the province as a party worker for the CCF, (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) a party founded in 1932 by a number of

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socialist, farm, co-operative and Labour groups and the League for Social Reconstruction. She was a tireless organizer for the CCF Bengough district provincial constituency as well as the Assiniboia federal constituency. During her career she worked for Allan Brown, longtime MLA from Bengough, first elected in 1944 as well as Les Benjamin, NDP Member of Parliament, first elected in 1968.

Dewey and Elsie semi-retired to Regina in the late sixties' where they managed several apartment buildings for the Pearlman family. Dewey was in his element always tinkering and rescuing bits and bobs from the dumpster and making them functional again. He fixed the toaster one day, put it back together with 3 pieces left over and the toaster worked perfectly! The family always said he had more patience than Job and nothing delighted him more than spending time with his two grandchildren collecting rocks or patiently allowing his granddaughter to play "hairdresser". Even in his 70's, he could be found crawling up and down cliffs with the grandchildren or heading up a tree to get that perfect vacation nature shot.

With more free time and a little extra money at hand, they purchased a Golden Falcon travel trailer and would join Delmar's family for road trips in Canada and the USA. There were trips to Expo '67 in Montreal, a visit to the Black Hills in South Dakota and various trips to the west coast of British Columbia or north to Peace River country in Alberta to visit Dewey's brothers and their extended families. Assiniboia was also a favorite weekend destination to catch up on local happenings at the local Co-op coffee shop.

Elsie maintained her role in politics and was eventually awarded numerous commemorative plaques along with Prairie landscape oil paintings to celebrate her over 50 years of service to the CFF and NDP. Even after she retired from her active role, she and Dewey watched every bi-election and election, be it provincial or federal with great anticipation. Younger generations of politicians and organizers still contacted her for advice and guidance and visited at the Gorius home to hear tales of past election glories and disappointing defeats.

Over the years there were a few health scares. Elsie successfully beat advanced lung cancer in the 1970's, one of the few at that time to survive such an ordeal. Dewey had a bout of prostate cancer in the early 1980's but also managed a full recovery. After Dewey passed away peacefully in 1989 at age 90, Elsie moved to Calgary to be closer to her two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. As was her nature, it wasn't long before she was President of the Golden Age Club in her downtown retirement building and organizing the seniors' meetings and field trips. She also relished the opportunity to babysit her youngest great grandchild and surprise him with her special treat of miniature marshmallows.

Over time, as the family began to leave Calgary, she made the decision to move back to her beloved Saskatchewan. She took up residence in the independent living portion of the Regina Pioneer Village and after suffering a succession of small strokes, she moved into a private care home in Regina where she passed away quietly in her sleep just two weeks before her 91<sup>st</sup> birthday.

Her funeral focused on her long political affiliations and was attended over-whelmingly by NDP members young and old. We're sure she enjoyed that aspect except she probably would have re-organized the tea and the seating arrangements to her exacting standards!