



## Frank Alex Kovrig

August 7, 2020

FRANK KOVRIG October 30th 1929 - August 7th 2020.

At the ripe old age of 90, Frank Kovrig passed away at the Toronto East General hospital on Friday, August 7th 2020 with his two daughters by his side.

Frank grew up in Raymond Alberta with his siblings Jolayne and Steve and Hungarian immigrant parents Joseph and Elizabeth, so he could polka with the best of them. His family eventually moved to Brantford Ontario, and as Frank blossomed into a young man, he became a regular troublemaker at all the Hungarian dance halls.

In 1949, Frank met a beautiful young girl named Liz at a Valentine's dance. She lived in Guelph, so Frank would travel there on weekends to be with her. During the weekdays he worked long, hard hours in the tobacco fields, but the photo he kept of Liz tucked away in his wallet gave him the motivation to keep going. Frank wrote Liz weekly love letters, signing them with the pet name she had given him: "Snooky."

Frank married Liz as soon as she turned 18 (it seems too young these days, but it was normal back then). They polka'd together for many years, but were never able to get pregnant. Fortunately, they had a good time trying. Eventually they decided to adopt and Frank wanted daughters. When he was 39 years old, Frank became a parent to his first daughter Becky and then to Brenda at the age of 41 (it seemed too old back then, but it's normal these days). Frank taught his daughters how to polka so he could have two more dance partners at the Hungarian dance halls.

Frank worked in Human Resources for his whole career. He started work in Kitchener, then Brantford, and finally in Brampton Ontario, but it wasn't just fun and games at the office. Although he was well liked by his friends and family, he was also a tough negotiator against multiple unions - so tough that he once received a bomb threat on his home that forced his wife and daughters to evacuate. Frank kept his cool and he kept his charm, eventually winning over that union as well.

He was definitely a character – a gentle soul and a trickster. Frank always liked to say “frankly” and he was known for his bad jokes. Oh, the bad jokes were plentiful, and frankly, a lot of them were dirty. His dad jokes were even worse.

Frank, his wife and his daughters made up a biologically diverse family. Both Frank and Liz were raised by men who were not their biological fathers, so their daughter Brenda liked to call the Kovrigs "a family of bastards" and Frank thought that was just fine.

He sang the famous polka song “Roll out the Barrel” far too many times for his daughters to count, but he never learned to play the accordion. The banjo was Frank’s instrument of choice, so in a fit of teenage rebellion his daughter Becky took up the accordion instead.

Although he may not have honoured his roots with his instrument, Frank was true to his Hungarian spirit by teaching his daughters (and the younger generations in his family) as many Hungarian swear words as he could.

When he retired at 65 while living in Tecumseth Ontario, instead of putting his feet up and taking it easy, Frank focussed on fulfilling his lifelong dream of working as a used car salesman. No one knows why.

Becky and Brenda met Dave and Stefan, who helped give Frank and Liz three grandchildren to dote on in their senior years – Nathan, Jessica, and Elsa.

Frank and Liz downsized into an apartment in Barrie and they enjoyed kicking the asses of many old geezers at the local seniors centre with their ace dart game. Eventually they had to move into a nursing home in Scarborough, but they didn’t lose their competitive spirit. Their bingo game was strong, so the collection of winning tissue boxes stacked up in their shared room.

Confined to a wheelchair for the last few years and in a lot of pain, Frank struggled. He couldn’t walk, and he could barely see or hear a damn thing, but the man never lost his sense of humour or his big, warm smile.

On September 1st, Frank would have celebrated 69 years of marriage with Liz. We can only hope that somewhere polka music is blasting and he’s giving dance lessons to anyone interested - while waiting, very patiently, for his sweetheart to join him in the big Hungarian dancehall on the other side.

A celebration of life (including polka music) will be held at a future date. To be notified, email his daughter Brenda at [bkovrig@gmail.com](mailto:bkovrig@gmail.com).

# Comments

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“ My Uncle Frank—who was technically my grandmother's brother but in our large, sprawling Hungarian family sometimes it was difficult to pinpoint exact relationships, especially as children—was a gem.

He seemed so even-keeled, so poised with an inner contentment, that he always wore a smile. Just look at the accompanying photo the family has chosen for his tribute page, that's a happy man!

I know everyone has challenges in their lives, but Uncle Frank had three amazing women in his, and seemed to dote on them in a way that exemplifies what a good father and husband should be. He took his young daughters to concerts that I'm sure were not on his list of must-sees, he stood by his wife always, he treated us all with respect and love. I'm happy I was able to see him last fall before the world changed. And he was still smiling, his eyes twinkling, still telling stories and jokes in his warm, reassuring way.

His was a life well lived. I loved him and he will be missed.

Laurie Sarkadi

Laurie Sarkadi - August 24, 2020 at 12:45 PM

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“ Tootsie and I remember how Frank & Liz could dance the Tango just about everyone would stop to watch them that was at the Hungarian Hall.

Reta Prokator - August 21, 2020 at 12:56 PM

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“ When I was a young kid, I learned that my Uncle Frank was my godfather. That made him something special to me. Aside from his corny jokes and exceptional Christmas gifts, I paid close attention to him and made personal, formative notes based on what he represented as a person..

What an honour to have had him as an uncle and a role model. I loved him dearly and will thank him forever.

David Chato - August 21, 2020 at 11:02 AM

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“ My fondest memories of Uncle Frank are from my childhood at Christmastime. The entire family would gather at either my grandparent’s or my parent’s house for a big Hungarian Christmas where the food and wine were plenty. Uncle Frank played Santa – and I always received a lovely gift from Mr. and Mrs. ‘Santa’ (aka Uncle Frank and Aunt Liz) as they were my God parents. That made me feel so special as a child. I also remember when my mom passed away, Frank told us that my mom, his older sister Jolayne, basically raised him when they were children growing up because their parents were always working. He said she was responsible for him and protected him like a mother hen. Growing up in biologically diverse family, I think this is particularly important in shaping a person. I also remember dancing with him at a wedding – the song was by ABBA – and we danced a polka! Frank was a charming, delightful man who was fun to be around. He loved his family and blessed us with his calm demeanor and groan-worthy humour. I wish him a peaceful journey beyond the veil. Sending much love to the Kovrig family.

**Criss Chato Hajek** - August 21, 2020 at 10:01 AM

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“ It is with fond loving memories that I say good-bye to Great Uncle Frank and with respect for his 90 years of living and 69 years with Aunt Liz. Frank was Uncle to my mother - Janet Taylor (Sarkadi, Chato). As I grew up I never really thought of Frank & Liz as individuals ;-), it was always Uncle Frank & Aunt Liz, they were a pure team. As i think of the team now, I recall Uncle Frank’s calm and cool demeanour and Aunt Liz’s slightly louder disposition, a great yin and yang. I too, was educated as a young boy on Uncle Frank’s jokes and dry sense of humour, and perhaps he planted some of those dry seeds in my humour gene as well, as it seems to be passing on throughout our family. The tribute to Frank’s life was amazing, and I send my love and hugs to all the family.

Brian Sarkadi

**Brian Sarkadi** - August 19, 2020 at 10:13 PM

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“ I first met Frank at a Chato/Kovrig/Sarkadi family reunion. I attended as a friend of Brian Sarkadi, one of Frank and Liz’ grand-nephews. The family was large and fun and full of love. Becky and Brenda were still wee. I later married Frank’s niece, Criss and became part of the family. Frank clearly stood out as a patriarch, with his sister, soon to become my mother-in-law Jolayne or Jolanka-bird, as the matriarch. Frank held court with some of his nephews, and the other men-folk, and as one of the younger men there, I could tell that he was regaling them with stories or jokes, and that I needed to sit in. He was a lovely guy and very approachable, so I always made sure to get some quality time in with Uncle Frank, whenever we got together after that.

I wish I could remember specific jokes. I think I tell the only three that I can remember. Frank’s were usually groaners and Dad jokes, unless they were blue, but the way he told them and the pleasure he derived was what I always loved. The punch-lines for me were never the actual words, but the laugh he had, and the chortling after the punch-line, which lit me up!

Frank was the type of guy you always wanted to be... kind, funny and full of love. I loved him too.

Rest easy, Frank.

I’ll never Forget the time I ate his dictionary.  
He looked at me and said, “Mark, my words!”

Xoxo Mark Hajek  
Nephew by marriage

mark hajek - August 19, 2020 at 02:20 PM

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“ What a lovely written tribute to uncle Frank. I remember all the get together when we were kids, whether it was at great grandma Molnars or at grandmas, Christmas’ or just visiting when we know you were coming to town. His humor was always a delight, and his smile was always big. Sorry again for your loss and my thoughts and prayers are with you & your families. Give aunt Liz a hug for me. xo

Kimberley Lowe - August 19, 2020 at 01:44 PM

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“ I am sorry to hear about the passing of your dad. He was a great guy and always treated me well. Your dad fed me my first beer, Labatts Blue, (I guess I have him to blame) and always bought us Chinese food when we visited your grandfather in Brantford Sunday afternoons. He gave me and my friends all jobs at the City of Brampton which we reminisced about the other day when I found out about his passing. My first job was picking gum off the floor of buses for the Brampton Transit. That job didn't last very long but he was happy to find me one that I liked. His jokes could be hit or miss and I remember he had a book of flatulence jokes that he liked to pull out every so often. He had a tough job sometimes mediating with union folk but was always good spirited when the day was done. I am sure he kept his sense of humour right up to the end. Long may you run Mr. Kovrig.

AH - August 19, 2020 at 12:12 PM

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“ 5 files added to the album Memories Album



Brenda Kovrig - August 13, 2020 at 02:44 PM

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“ What a lovely written tribute to a kind, fun-loving and considerate man. I will miss Frank every time I call a bingo game for the rest of my days. Thanks for the love and laughter. Sorry I missed those dance lessons.

Debra McGraw - August 11, 2020 at 06:58 PM

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“ 8 files added to the tribute wall



REBECCA PATTON - August 10, 2020 at 02:07 PM

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“ 9 files added to the album Memories Album



**REBECCA PATTON** - August 10, 2020 at 01:58 PM