

Dr. Maria "Myszka" Kryt (née Lecewicz)

February 22, 2021

Born April 26, 1922, in Opole, Poland; died February 22, 2021, in Toronto.

Predeceased by her beloved husband of 58 years, Jacek (2011) and her cherished son Alexander (2015). Mourned by daughters Evelyn Kryt and Magda (Kryt) Nusink (Richard, d. 2017) and grandchildren Francis and Beatrice Nusink, as well as family in Poland, England, and Canada.

Though charmingly discreet about her precise age (which many underestimated by decades), Maria was just two months shy of her 99th birthday. With her joie de vivre and eternally youthful spirit, she had us convinced she would easily make it to "sto lat" (100 years) and beyond.

Living by the motto "Vouloir, c'est pouvoir" (Where there's a will, there's a way), Maria committed completely to whatever she put her mind to. Fearlessness and perseverance were her essential traits. She always aimed high, not just figuratively but also literally, as evidenced by her passion for mountain climbing. Every summer for 20 years after her retirement in 1986, she and Jacek challenged themselves scaling the magnificent and beloved Dolomites in Selva Val Gardena. She returned for one last visit at the age of 95, determined still to hike at least the gentler mountain trails, where she was revered as a senior alpinist.

Maria took great joy in family times at the cottage in Barry's Bay, spending long summer days relaxing, swimming, catching up on her reading, and feeding the chipmunks. We had many memorable evenings by the campfire, singing traditional Polish songs and folk favourites, gazing at the night sky and wishing on shooting stars. In the cottage community, she was a familiar sight, energetically walking with her Nordic poles on the hilly dirt roads, to the admiration and inspiration of all.

A healthy mind went along with a healthy body. Blessed with a lively intellect and a curiosity about everything under the sun, Maria devoted herself to the life of the mind, seeking not only knowledge but also an understanding of the world around her and the

nature of our human existence.

Her vast library (in four languages, yet) spanned a diversity of subjects. She was constantly reading and making notes, in her insatiable desire to learn and keep her mind sharp. Though retired as a physician, Maria maintained her professional memberships and diligently kept abreast of new developments and important issues in the practice of medicine. She also continued her education with courses in Italian, philosophy, art, and music; travel was another mode of learning which she enjoyed well into her 90s. Able to converse with anyone on any subject, she had an abundant supply of astute observations, stories, and quotations for every occasion. Her witty and original sense of humour would often leave us helpless with laughter.

No average senior, Maria seemed unstoppable. After Jacek's passing in 2011, she had her first hip replacement; six months later, she was once more climbing mountains in Italy. She continued to live independently at her Willowdale condo, doing her own cooking and cleaning, and driving to the bank, the grocery store, and church. She kept up an active correspondence with beautifully written letters to our family in Poland and faraway friends. She regularly enjoyed leisurely lunches with her social circles and, as interested as ever in cultural events, frequently attended opera, concerts, and theatre. She was a steadfast supporter of her grandchildren's various performances and recitals. As always, a smile hid every worry, and her positive outlook kept her on track. She often reassured herself, and us, that everything would be all right.

Born in the era of the horse and buggy, Maria was the second of three girls.

Independent by nature, she learned self-sufficiency early, leaving her hometown of Kraśnik at the age of 10 to become a boarding student at the private Ursuline School in Lublin, where she applied herself enthusiastically to her lessons and excelled.

The innocence of her schoolgirl life was shattered in September 1939 with the horrors of war. The first bombs fell mere steps from her home beside the agricultural co-operative which her father managed and which the Germans had targeted.

In 1941, she began pre-medical studies at the University of Warsaw, which was operating clandestinely under the Nazi occupation. At the same time, under the pseudonym "Myszka," she worked as a courier for the Armia Krajowa (AK), Polish underground resistance, carrying money and messages concealed in the lining of her coat across the city – and risking execution if caught.

On the eve of the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, Maria reported for duty as a medic in

the battle to free the capital from the Germans. After 63 days of intense fighting, Warsaw fell, and she was taken to Germany as a prisoner of war. The challenges of her wartime experience intensified her innate strength of character and brought out qualities that would serve her for life: courage, loyalty, trustworthiness, discipline, level-headedness, optimism, perseverance, and humour. She knew indeed what it meant to live each day as if it might be her last.

After liberation by American forces in 1945, Maria chose not to return to Poland, as anyone who had patriotically served in the AK was deemed an enemy of the new communist regime. So she made her way to Brussels, where educational funding from the London-based Polish government-in-exile was available. Her first degree was in dentistry; with earnings from her dental practice, she put herself through medical school, fulfilling a dream she had held since childhood.

Jacek had also ended up in Brussels, studying business and economics, and the two were part of a friendly and mutually supportive circle of displaced young Poles eager to make up for the lost war years and resume a normal life. They were good friends, often studying together, until the day of Maria's graduation as a doctor, when Jacek professed his love and proposed.

They married in December 1952 and a year later were blessed with their first child, Alexander. In 1954, they made the momentous decision to emigrate to Canada, a move they would never regret, though it was not without its hardships, especially in the early years.

Maria quickly obtained employment at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Halifax. A female doctor was something of a novelty in Canada in those days: at that hospital, there was no change room for women doctors, and she was obliged to change into scrubs with the nurses.

In 1957, seeking better opportunities for Jacek to use his professional qualifications, the young family left for Toronto, where Maria, armed with glowing references from the Royal Vic, quickly secured a position in anaesthesia at Women's College Hospital. This was the start of a long career as an invaluable member of the OR team, which meant working long shifts, both days and nights, as well as training medical students as an assistant professor at the University of Toronto. Affectionately nicknamed "Dr. Blue Eyes" by her colleagues, she was respected for her professional discipline and gratefully acknowledged by patients for her lovely bedside manner. All this in addition to running a household and raising three children in an admirably equal partnership with Jacek, himself a busy professor at

Ryerson, who lovingly supported all her endeavours.

As a mother, Maria was endlessly generous, not only showering us with unconditional love but also, with Jacek, providing us with rich and varied experiences, perhaps best exemplified by our summer camping adventures through Europe. These expeditions gave us an extraordinary education, unobtainable in any school, and created powerful family memories. We always devoted time to visiting Poland, travelling around the country to historic sites and places of natural beauty with our aunts, uncles, and cousins, immersing ourselves in Polish language and culture so that we would know and treasure our roots.

Without any fanfare, Maria was a woman who lived her full potential. She accomplished great things not to gain recognition, but to use her God-given talents and abilities meaningfully by creating a life affording them scope.

On her final visit to Poland in 2015, she visited the newly established Museum of the Warsaw Uprising, where her story was documented in an extensive interview. She was honoured as a heroine for her contributions – although she herself stated with characteristic modesty that she had done only what needed doing at the time.

Maria's life was a gift to many, and her light will shine on in all our hearts. As her family, we have been greatly blessed by her unconditional love and feel a gratitude that no words are adequate to express. With her indomitable spirit, Maria has shown us her wholehearted commitment to the adventure of life. Let us honour her memory by following her beautiful and inspiring example.

A private funeral Mass will be held at St. Gabriel's Passionist Parish on Saturday March 13 at 10:30 a.m.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://ryerson.zoom.us/j/95642254841?pwd=NWhOeIR5MkRycjFRUUx0L2ZjdDJ6QT09>

or

<https://zoom.us/join>

and use

Meeting ID: 956 4225 4841

Passcode: 404143

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Doctors Without Borders or the Women's College Hospital Foundation.

Comments



“ Dear Evelyn & Magda,

While I only met your mother on a handful of occasions, usually in the chaos of whatever was happening at the moment, she always strode calmly into the fray with a cheery smile and so much warmth and charm. Engaging us all in focussed and friendly conversations, your mom knew more about us than we could have ever guessed. What a sharp wit and mind she had!

The gift is in having met her. The years of hearing the raucous daredevil adventure stories and now seeing the montage, your mother was an incredible woman. With incredible daughters and the next generation of strong, intelligent and caring individuals. A very proud family legacy.

Wishing you strength and peace during this time of unbelievable loss. Thinking of you always, Love, Kelley

Kelley Glasner - March 23 at 03:12 PM



“ Dear Magda and Evelyn

I am so sorry to hear of your loss. Although I never met your mom I know she was an exceptional person in so many ways. She was lucky to have two devoted and loving daughters. I am thinking of you and your family during this difficult time.

Audrey Neamtan

Audrey Neamtan - March 16 at 10:57 AM



“ Dear Magda and Eva,
Having lost contact information for Magda, I "google" every year in the hope that a way to get in touch will materialize. This notice appeared when I searched today. It's a sad way to find a cherished friend, and I am so very sorry to hear of the passing of your lovely mother. I only met her a few times before my family left Toronto - but she was always so warm and kind, and I think the word that best describes the impression that I have carried with me is "merry." As a young person I was so impressed by your having such a hard working and intellectual mum who was fun as well! I had never met anyone like her - so different and inspiring. Thank you both for sharing some of her life story here: she was a truly remarkable woman. I send deepest sympathy to you both and your children.

Anne Johnson - March 14 at 11:11 PM



“ I first met Maria in the 1980s and was fortunate to see her periodically over the ensuing decades. She was always the same: warm, lively, smart, and funny.

The years went by. I was pleased to congratulate Maria when she turned 98 last April, and in June we attended a wonderful play along with other friends of the Kryt family. That was the last time I saw her, but I often overheard delightful phone conversations between her and Evelyn during the following months.

What a wonderful woman she was! I will miss her.



Allegra Robinson - March 13 at 08:35 PM



“ 11 files added to the album Memories Album



andrew janik - March 13 at 11:56 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



andrew janik - March 13 at 11:55 AM



“ My deepest sympathy to Evelyn and Magda and family. Your mom lived such an inspiring life and full of love. I remember Evelyn the wonderful travels you had together. Cherish the memories. Linda Muller

Linda Muller - March 13 at 11:53 AM



“ Dear Magda & Evelyn
Our family has so many fond memories of your family over the many years, and in particular your mother. We will always remember the many times that Colleen, myself and the kids would drive to Barry's Bay town from the cottage, for ice creams at the Dairy. On the way there, on many occasions, we would see your mom walking along the road with her walking poles. She did this religiously, as you know... every day!. We would stop, say hello and your mom would then say hello to each one of us and ask us how we were. She cared so much!
Later on in life as our kids got older and moved away, Colleen and I would continue to stop on the road to say hello to your mom. Again- she would ask how Colleen and I were and then begin to ask how each of our children were...what they were doing and when they would be coming back up to Barry's Bay-:)
Once again i remember doing this just one or two years ago as i was up there alone. I stopped to say hello to your mom as she walked up the long winding big hill. I asked her if she was OK, if she needed a ride etc.....Of course, with a big smile on her face...she said...no i am fine...i will take my time....and then she proceeded to ask about Colleen and the kids!!! I asked her if i could take a picture of her. She had a BIG smile for me and said-of course!-:)

River Road and Kartuzy road will never be the same without your dear mother walking on it...but we as a family will forever keep those memories close to our hearts!-:)

With all our love

Colleen, Andrew, Claire (Sophie), Mickie, Matthew (Maryse) Janik

andrew janik - March 12 at 12:03 PM



“ My deepest sympathy to your family on death of Maria Myszka Kryt. I was lucky to know her as friend, and as colleague . The memories of her and her fine qualities remain with me. Sincerely,
Hanna Samulska-Bartel

Hanna Samulska-Bartel - March 11 at 09:34 PM



“ Dear Magda and Evelyn! Please accept our sincere condolences on your Mother's passing. We were neighbours for some 20 years and we loved her thoroughly. Your tribute is excellent and truly reflects the unique person she was. Best regards from our new condo home in Montreal, Andrew & Monika Simon



Andrew & Monika Simon - March 11 at 09:25 PM

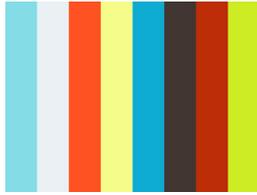


“ Evelyn and Magda, I am so sorry to hear about the passing of your mother. I know how close you were to her. My deepest sympathy is extended to you and your family overseas during this challenging time. Hugs and love! Anita

Anita Windisman - March 11 at 05:09 PM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Evelyn kryt - March 11 at 09:46 AM



“ How spectacular she was and honestly she lives on in you my friend A full of love . My condolences as her passing will certainly be a missed part of you and your families lives . This was such a beautiful tribute .

Deborah Ross - March 11 at 06:50 PM



“ evelyn and magda what a beautiful bank of memories you've put together in commemorating your mom - i only met her once and thought she was a really amazing gal - you were very lucky to have had such a wonderful role model - i'm so, so sorry for your loss but you have been left with loads of loving memories you can cherish forever! much love to you ladies - thinking of you ashley

Ashley - March 11 at 08:43 PM



“ Dear Evelyn and Magda, I am so sorry for your loss, your Mother left a very large void that'll take a long time to fill. I'll always remember her jolly sense of humour. May she rest in Peace. Uzma

Uzma - March 10 at 09:09 PM



“ To the whole family, Mrs Kryt was a wonderful lady ! it was always a pleasure too see her and speak with her. I know Mrs.Kryt will be sadly missed by so many . Rest in peace to a wonderful woman xoxoxoxo

Love,
Helen & David Nusink

helen nusink - March 07 at 04:56 PM