

The Story of My Grandparents, Frank and Aline Píghín:

Their Lives, Then and Now (2010)

Lives Well-Lived (updated 2025)



written by Shay Jones

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My grandparents, Frank and Aline Pighin, celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary on June 10th, 2010. This kind of success story is such an uncommon event these days, it led me to wonder: how did they get there? What factors influenced the lives of these two amazing people? And, can I learn anything from their experiences? I realized that I had more questions than answers, so I asked if I could interview them. After a series of interviews and conversations throughout May and June 2010, I created a biography to commemorate the lives of my grandparents. The stories that follow are their lives, as they remember them.

Shay Jones, June 2010

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It is hard to believe that fifteen years have passed since the first edition of this biography. So much has happened in that time! Grandpa is now 97 years old, and Grandma has been in Heaven for three years. When I offered to update the biography, Grandpa was happy to tell me stories and answer all of my questions. I interviewed him a few times in March and April 2025. He told me more stories from his younger life, so I decided to add the new information using a different font to distinguish it from the original biography. Grandpa also gave me copies of Grandma's eulogy and documents written by Aunt Janet with the details of his heart attack (February 2017) and stroke (November 2024). I have summarized those documents to include in this updated version of the biography.

I noticed that in both versions of the biography, Grandpa didn't say much about their devotion to the Catholic church, even though that's been a significant part of their lives. Seeing as Grandpa wouldn't brag about his service to the church, I phoned Father Gilbert to ask how Grandma and Grandpa have contributed to the church over the decades. His response is included in the story that follows, with his permission. Grandpa edited and approved of the contents of this biography before we shared it.

Shay Jones, September 2025

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to my aunt, Janet Todoruk, for her hours of work digitizing Grandma and Grandpa's photo albums and making photo books to record our family's history. Also, thanks to Aunty Janet for keeping excellent records of Grandpa's medical experiences.

Thanks to my cousin, Tammy Craik, for creating the website, www.pighin.ca, where the digitized photo albums can be found. Almost all of the photographs in this document are from that website.

A big thank you to Grandma and Grandpa for telling me, and allowing me to share, the amazing stories of their lives!

My Grandmother - Eileen Cecile Marie Theresa Houle (Aline Pighin)

Grandma was born on July 26th, 1930, in Prud'homme, Saskatchewan to Joe and Maria Houle. She was born in the middle of six brothers and one sister. Grandma had one sister who died at birth and another one who died when she was two or three years old. Grandma's names, Eileen and Theresa, were for her two sisters who passed away.

Grandma's family lived in Quebec for at least seven generations. Most likely, they came from France. While researching Grandma's ancestry online, I came across a strange pattern of eights. Grandma and Grandpa have eight children. Grandma's parents had eight children as well. Grandma's grandparents, Charles and Rosanna Masson, also had eight surviving children. Furthermore, Charles Masson came from a family of eight children! Four generations in a row, all the way up to Grandma's great grandparents, had families of eight children. (Historical information from: Life as it was: Prud'homme, Saskatchewan, 1897-1981, archived at www.ourroots.ca.)



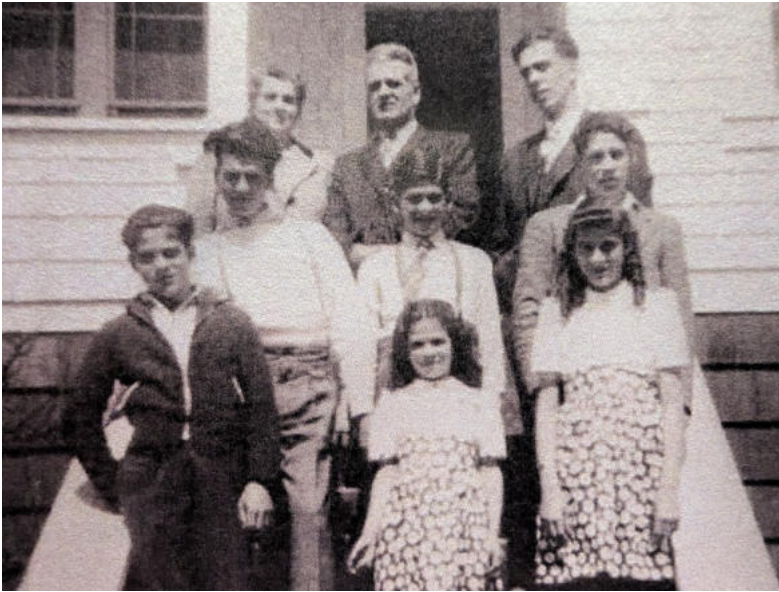
Grandma's parents, Joe and Maria Houle



Houle's Garage 1931

Times change, and the coincidental number of children stop there. I thought our family was big with Grandma and Grandpa having twenty-two grandchildren, but Grandma's parents had forty grandchildren! No wonder my dad was never as impressed as I was at how many cousins I had. He had thirty-nine!

The year Grandma was born, her family moved from Prud'homme, Saskatchewan to Crystal Springs, Saskatchewan. Crystal Springs was a one street town with a population of about 150 people. Most of the residents were grain farmers. Grandma's family lived at one end of the street, and her dad had a garage at the other end of the street. He had a barber chair in his garage too. He would rinse his



Grandma's family: Top row: Mom Maria, Dad Joe, brother Lionel
Middle row: brothers Don, Larry, Neil
Bottom row: Roger, Cecile, Eileen (missing: Dennis)

hands in coal oil or turpentine after he was finished fixing cars so he could cut hair. It was about five or ten cents for a haircut. If you couldn't pay that, you could trade about four haircuts for a chicken! Grandma's dad also had a power plant that supplied electricity for the town, and he was the town electrician. Her dad had a car, so they could visit his parents in Dormey. Dormey was about twenty miles away; however, twenty miles was a long ways back then, on those roads. Grandma's mom had a café attached to their house. Grandma recalls that in those days, you did whatever you could to

earn a living. They worked very hard, and struggled through ten lean years in Crystal Springs.

Grandma's mom spoke to her children in French, but they answered in English. Grandma understood French, but didn't speak it. Her brothers, Lionel and Don, spoke French better than the others. Grandma's family always lived in English speaking communities.

In 1941, Grandma's family moved from Crystal Springs to Port Alberni to make a fresh start after some bad luck when their garage burned down. Grandma would have been ten or eleven years old then.

Grandma always wore a skirt or dress, not pants. She had lots of hand-me-downs from Aunt Blanche. They bought most of their clothes, until Grandma took up sewing in high school and made some outfits for herself. She also learned how to crochet and embroider. She did some spool knitting, which she enjoyed. Back then, they didn't have extra time or money for hobbies like today. Hobbies were to make the things they needed.



Grandma enjoying her sewing

Her dad and all of her brothers were very lucky that they avoided the war. They worked in

jobs like the shipyards in Vancouver, so their work was important for the war effort. Some of them were too young, and her dad was too old, for conscription. During the war, there were blackouts. The technology of the time meant that it would be much harder to bomb a town at night if you couldn't see it. The whole town put tarpaper or black cloth on their windows at night to block the light in the houses. Grandma recalls being very scared about the perceived necessity of blackouts as a child. It was just a precaution; luckily, there were no bombs dropped in Canada.

Grandma's mom was definitely stricter than her dad, but her parents were not really hard on them. Her dad was a pushover, but Grandma's mom would pinch you between upper arm muscles, and you listened! Grandma insists that she was a good kid, and it was the boys they had



Grandma as a young girl in the early 1940s



Grandma was always fashionably dressed

to look after!

Children didn't have all of the toys that kids have nowadays. Grandma used to play with cut out paper dolls, bought from a store. She would cut out the dolls and the clothes and dress them up. Grandma spent lots of time with her best friend, Angeline, in Crystal Springs. They did everything together. There was a lumberyard behind Grandma's house, and they used to play hide and seek there. Her family always had a Labrador dog. Tippy is the only one she can remember. Grandma played marbles, hopscotch, jacks, and she liked skipping. She played Monopoly a lot in her late teens. Sometimes she went bowling and to the movies when she was a teenager.

In the evenings, Grandma's family spent a lot of time playing cards. Her mom and dad loved Bridge. They also played Whist and Canasta. Her relatives still play a lot of cards. When Grandma and Grandpa go visiting, they



Eileen Houle 1948

have dinner or coffee, and then the cards come out. They never did play cards with their own children.

When she was young, Grandma had two main chores: she washed dishes and ironed. But remember, there were dishes from ten people, and no dishwashers back then. Her family had a gasoline-powered washing machine for the clothes. They had a wringer to squeeze the water out, and they hung the clothes on the line to dry, so there was a lot of ironing to do.

Grandma's mom made jams, canned fruit, and churned butter at home. There was always a vegetable garden in the back yard. Her family even had rabbits for food at one time. They always had a cow for milk, and they would raise the calf for meat.

Schools had grades one through eight in the same classroom. Grandma used an inkwell and straight pens, or nib pens to write. She went to high school in Nanaimo. After the army pulled out, the army camp was turned into a convent, which was where she went to high school. Grandma enjoyed school, especially math, right up to grade twelve. There was a class system at that time. There was a girl from Powell River who Grandma liked, but the girl was a ward of the state, so the nuns didn't want Grandma to be friends with her. The nuns also taught her to spell her name using the English spelling, Aline, instead of the French spelling, Eileen, that was on her birth certificate.

Growing up was very different in the 1930s and '40s. Grandma survived the mumps and



Highschool photograph when Grandma was in grade 9



Top: Joe Houle (Grandma's dad)

Middle: Grandma's aunt and Grandma in pink

Bottom: Grandma's cousin and Maria Houle (Grandma's mom)

measles as a child. Everyone got them those days. She didn't get an allowance, but she started babysitting when she was about thirteen. She earned about five cents an hour. For her birthday, Grandma's mom made a cake and that was it. If she was lucky, her birthday gift would be an extra pair of socks!

In the house Grandma grew up in, there was a sawdust stove for heat and cooking on. There was a bin alongside the stove, so it would keep feeding itself if you poured sawdust into the top of the bin. It was very energy efficient with not many ashes. It wasn't dirty like the old coal stoves. They had water in the house in a cistern holding tank. Grandma's family had an icebox instead of a refrigerator. They stored food in the basement, which was kind of like a cellar. They couldn't waste the water for indoor plumbing, so they had an outhouse.

People didn't go on vacations back then. The closest thing to a vacation was visiting relatives. During the summer holidays, Grandma sometimes stayed with her cousins in Prud'homme. They had lots of family around Crystal Springs. Her family spent time visiting the Turgeons, her mother's sister's family.

Grandma's family mostly celebrated religious holidays. At Christmas, they would have a turkey for dinner, and put up a tree. Grandma doesn't remember giving gifts at Christmas time, and she received very little. They got more gifts when they lived in Port Alberni, when her family had more to give. At Easter, they would have a ham. On Canada Day and Victoria Day, the whole town would celebrate with a parade. Grandma sometimes got an ice cream cone for a special treat.

While her father only went to grade 5, Grandma was the first in her family to graduate. Grandma's family was very proud of her. They celebrated with a very formal dance.

Grandma



Grandma's Graduating Class of 1949

Before graduating, Grandma had two jobs. Her first job was at Island Farms, an ice cream shop. After that, she worked at Woodward's in the fabric and patterns department. After she graduated, Grandma worked full time at Woodward's. She worked there even after she got married, until she started having children.



Grandma in her graduation gown

My Grandfather - Ennio Enore Lanfranco (Frank) Pighin

Grandpa was born on June 23rd 1928, in Udine, Italy to Umberto and Rosa Pighin. His surname, Pighin (pronounced Pee-geen in Italy) was not as common as Smith in Canada, but there were quite a few Pighins in Italy.

Grandpa's dad's dad, Jovanni (John) Pighin, was only in his late fifties when he passed away. He fell off a hay wagon and eventually died from his injuries. Therefore, Grandpa's dad's mother, Jovanna Pighin, lived with Grandpa's family while he was growing up.

Grandpa's earliest memory is when he was about four years old. In Italy, they had a central fireplace with a chain that hung down the middle of the chimney to hang a pot from. Everything was cooked in that one pot. His paternal grandmother (Jovanna)



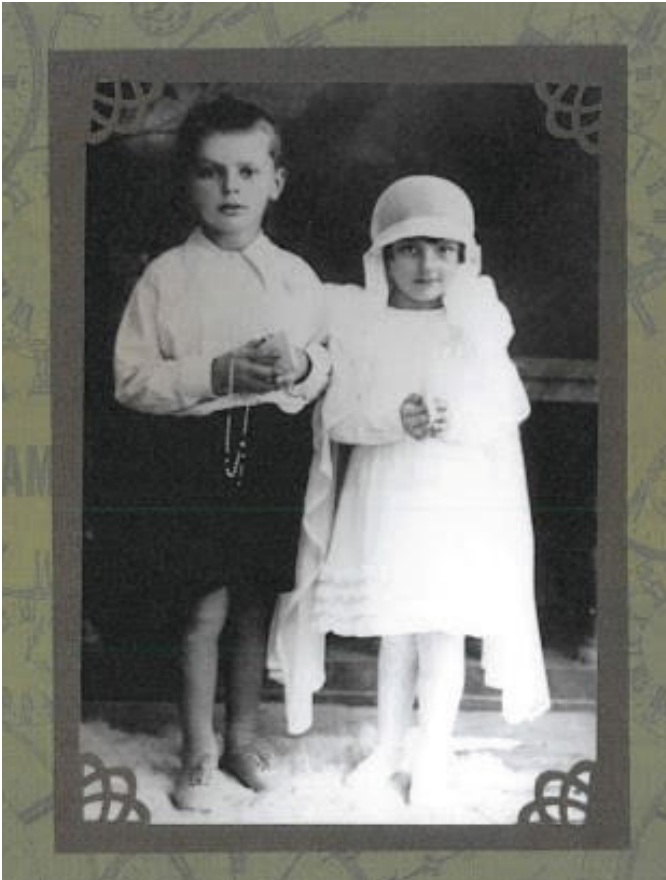
Grandpa's parents, Rosa and Umberto Pighin



Front centre: Grandpa (Ennio)

Back row left to right: Grandpa's mom (Rosa), toddler sister Limbania, older sister Argia, Grandma Jovanna, oldest brother Andy

sat in one of the three or four rows of miniature bleachers in the house around that fireplace. She always wore a black kerchief, like a veil, draped over her head but never tied, so he never saw her hair. She used to sit there drinking coffee, but she didn't have milk in her coffee. She had "schnappa", which was home-brew whiskey. Grandpa knew this, so he'd ask for a sip of her coffee. She was always drink-



Grandpa's and sister Limbania's First Communions

Grandpa's family lived on a farm in Italy. They had four cows, some lambs, rabbits for food - a bit of everything, including a vineyard. They had a watchdog, named Chile (pronounced Chee-lay) on a run in the yard. That dog would let anyone into the yard, but he would not let them out unless one of the family members was there.

Grandpa's dad, Umberto Giacomo Pighin, first came to Canada in 1910 from Italy. His first trip was on a cattle boat. He worked on the boat, going back and forth, to earn money to pay the fare for his family to come to Canada. Grandpa's father and his two older brothers were the first to come. Andy was

ing coffee with a few drops of whiskey in it. His mother didn't like him drinking it, but his grandma gave him a sip here and there.

Grandpa's grandma had a stern personality – you do as I say or else! Now we know where Grandpa's sternness in his younger years came from! She passed away at about eighty-two years of age.

It's probably no surprise that Grandpa always liked going to church, even as a child. In Italy, he served mass. He learned how to speak Latin, because mass was in Latin, which is similar to Italian. Grandpa stopped speaking Italian when he came to Canada, and decades ago he lost the ability to speak or understand both Italian and Latin.



Grandpa (right) with his arm around his sister, Limbania (Babs)

twenty years older than Grandpa, and Zoilo was twenty-two years older. Grandpa had another older brother, Tony, born between Zoilo and Andy. Tony died of sunstroke when he was about 7 years old, before Grandpa was born.

Grandpa's dad and two surviving older brothers first worked on Grandpa's Uncle Angelo's dairy farm in Cranbrook, BC. When they finally settled in Rossland, it was time to bring the rest of the family to Canada. Grandpa, his two sisters Argia and Limbania (Babs), and Grandpa's mom Rosa Pighin (Brusutti), immigrated to Canada in February 1937. Because his father was overseas most of his childhood, Grandpa didn't know his own dad until he came to Canada at nine years old.

Grandpa's Uncle Pierre took them on a train to Trieste, where they set off from Italy to Canada. When they



got off the train to board the ship, they had to cross a road that was a sheet of ice.

They put their suitcases down and pushed them across the road on their hands and knees. They left Italy and docked in New York. After the ocean voyage, they got on a bus to Toronto. From there they took another train across Canada to British Columbia. It took five days and five nights. At every stop, they got out to buy food, but they didn't know the value of Canadian money. They held out an open hand of cash and let the vendor take whatever they wanted. For some reason, they ran out of money! To make matters worse, in Medicine Hat, someone stole Grandpa's mother's purse. It was very



cold because it was February. They couldn't afford a sleeping car, so they slept in their seats. Eventually, they met up with Grandpa's father and two brothers in Rossland. Grandpa and Argia agree that "it was well worth the trip, and they are in heaven here in Canada".

There was a large Italian community in Trail, but Grandpa's family decided to settle in Rossland. Rossland had very mixed cultures, which his dad preferred. They wanted to become Canadian. They were proud to be able to become Canadian. They had nothing against Italy, except they didn't like that it was a fascist country. They appreciated Canada because it was a democratic nation, and they could make a better living by coming here. Rossland was the first place Grandpa lived in Canada. Grandpa's dad worked in the smelter in Trail.



1942 Top row left to right: second oldest brother Zoilo, Grandpa (second youngest), oldest brother Andy

Bottom row: Dad Umberto, younger sister Limbania (Babs), older sister Argia, Mom Rosa

Mothers were the heart of the family, so it was Grandpa's dad who dealt out the discipline. His father gave him the strap, using a leather strap made for sharpening razors. It was two feet long and three inches wide. He would bend Grandpa over his knee, and make a loud grunting sound as he wound up. Grandpa remembers fearing the grunt more than the strap!

When he was growing up, Grandpa's family ate well, even though they were not well off. They always had good food on the table. Grandpa loved to eat his mother's homemade stew and polenta, a type of corn bread. They ate stew more often than spaghetti. They had a lot of heavy soups with a shell type of pasta in them. They grew their own fresh vegetables in a large garden in the summer. They had apple and pear trees in Rossland. They also bought fruit, vegetables, and meat in the winter from a group of Doukhobors (a Christian sect of Russian origin known for their pacifism and communal lifestyle) who lived near Castlegar and came to sell their wares once a week in Rossland.

When I asked Grandpa what he used to do for fun, he said he played baseball, and he hiked after the cows to find them and bring them home. I would have hated that, but he said he didn't mind it. He couldn't think of anything he hated. In those days, he didn't even hate garlic yet. His mother made him wear garlic around his neck to ward off colds. It wasn't just when he had a cold that he had to wear the garlic, but whenever anyone in the town had a cold!

When he was a child, Grandpa wore short pants and long stockings. A sweater, tie, and collared shirt, was his Sunday best. Usually, regular pants and a cotton, collared shirt were his clothes. They bought their clothes from a store, but his mother sewed too. His sister was a really good seamstress, and she made all her own clothes.

Grandpa's family didn't have very much free time. By the time the chores were done, it was bedtime. They sometimes chatted or played a bit of cards, but they had no TV. They didn't even have a radio. Chores were just part of life. He didn't even think of them as chores. Grandpa hauled coal and wood, he looked after the animals: the chickens, rabbits, and calf, and he milked the cows. He didn't get an allowance for his work, but that was normal, and he never felt hard-done-by.



Grandpa at 18 years old in 1946

An annual highlight for Grandpa and his siblings was a family picnic with the Italian Club in Trail. They didn't go on vacations, or do any travelling, but they enjoyed attending church gatherings. Birthdays were celebrated with a big hug, and "carry on, kid". There was no party or cake like today.

Grandpa didn't mind going to school, but he hated the first year in Rossland because he couldn't speak English. He had already completed grade three in Italy, but he had to start over in grade one when he came to Canada because he couldn't speak English. There were fifty students in Grandpa's grade one classroom. It was weird being bigger than the other kids and having your two sisters in the same grade. There was no gym, but the kids threw lots of rocks and snowballs, with the occasional game of soccer at recess. Grandpa walked thirty minutes to school every day with his two sisters.

Grandpa faced some struggles at school during WWII because the other boys knew he was from Italy, not one of Canada's allies. He remembers being bullied and pushed around when he first arrived, when he didn't speak English well yet.

Incredibly, Grandpa remembers the names of his teachers: Mr. Martin taught him grade one, Miss Tilson taught grade two, Miss Brydon was his third grade teacher, Miss Forbes taught fourth grade, and Mr. Peechee taught grade five. Teachers gave the strap in school, except for Mr. Peechee who never strapped anyone. Instead, he would lift you off your seat with a handful of your hair! Grandpa especially liked the sixth grade teacher, Miss Varco, because she let them build things and do some mechanics. Grandpa was in Miss Voiccy's class for grade 7. He said he learned the basics at school and then "learned at the school of hard knocks". Grandpa likes to joke that he went "halfway through grade 12", because although he was doing well at school, he left in April of grade 7 to go to work. Later in life, he ordered books through the mail, and learned by reading books. He subscribed to the magazine Popular Mechanics, which taught him a bit about the mechanics of a car.



Top row left to right: Andy, Zoilo, Argia, Frank, Babs
Bottom row: Mom Rosa and Dad Umberto

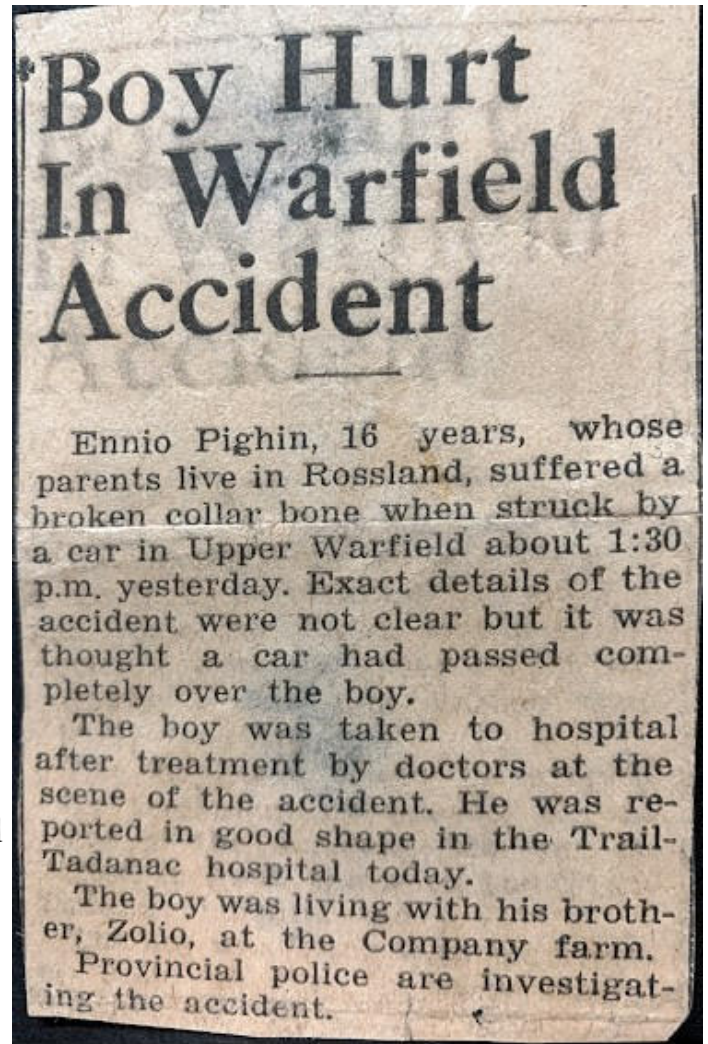
Leaving school was tempting because it was so easy to get many different jobs. He never had any dreams of what he wanted to be when he grew up. He said, "I always knew I would work all my life, and if I got lucky, maybe I would get an easier job". Grandpa was 15 years old when he left school because he had completed grades 1-3 twice.

Grandpa's first job was delivering newspapers around age 11 or 12 for a few years. He delivered the Nelson News at 5 am before school.

His first real job was in 1943 at a small dairy farm on the other side of Rossland. It was the first time Grandpa moved out of his parents' house, and he was only 15 years old. He had to milk about ten or fifteen cows at 5 am. There were only two workers, the owner and himself. They processed and bottled the milk and Grandpa delivered it to houses using a horse and buggy. Then he would come home, have lunch, and may have an hour off if there weren't odd things to do. In the afternoon, he would bring

the cows into the barn, feed them, milk them again, process and bottle the milk, and put it in the cooler for delivery the next day. He would finish at five or six o'clock at night. There were no weekends off because cows need to be milked seven days a week. At least on weekends they only had to milk cows and they didn't do any extra chores. In exchange for this lifestyle, Grandpa got free room and board and a dollar a day. Woodward's had \$1.49 days once a month. He remembers the jingle, "Dollar forty-nine day, Tuesday!" You could get a pair of sneakers or pants for kids at the discounted price of \$1.49.

Then Grandpa worked in Trail at a larger dairy farm that paid a little more and he only had to work eight hours a day. It was unionized, and the first farm in Canada with an 8-hour workday. They still had to milk the cows morning and night, with most of the day off in the middle. This farm had automatic milking machines, but they still had to do it by hand if anything broke down. There were more workers and about 150 cows. He would milk cows and deliver the milk in glass bottles. Grandpa drove the dairy truck before he had a license, but that wasn't a problem back then. Grandpa spent five or six hours a day delivering milk. He collected empty milk bottles that had coupons in them and exchanged them for full ones. People paid ahead of time. At first, the company was called CMNS, then it was called Cominco, and finally it was called Teck Cominco. Along with his pay he got a half pint of milk per day, perks of the trade. Unfortunately, this job led to Grandpa getting run over by a milk truck when he was 16. He got away by rolling out between the wheels of the truck, but ended up with a broken collarbone and his name in the newspaper.



There is a funny story about how he came to be known as Frank. He went to work in Great Central Lake when he was about seventeen years old, and the foreman asked him what his name was. He replied, "Ennio Pighin". The foreman frowned and asked, "Do you have a middle name?" and Grandpa said, "Enore". When he was asked if he had any other names, Grandpa responded with, "Lanfranco". The foreman smiled and said, "Great, we'll call you Frank." The funny thing was, Grandpa's older brother, Zoilo, had already gone through a similar ordeal, and they



decided to call him Frank too! So in Rossland, Grandpa went by the name Ennio, and his brother was called Frank. Grandpa said he “wasn’t fussy about what name they called him”.

When he was seventeen years old, in 1945, Grandpa went to work at the sawmill in the community of Great Central Lake on Vancouver Island. He drove a lumber carrier, also known as a straddle carrier, which goes over a load of lumber, closes, and lifts it up. It goes forward and backward at the same speed. He still had no license. Jobs back then were “the way things are supposed to be.” Older people taught younger people. You learned on the job. If you had any ambition, you could graduate upwards, learning to do whatever job you were interested in.



Grandpa’s photograph of one of the straddle carriers he drove at the sawmill

One day in 1946 at his job at Great Central Lake, Grandpa was driving a straddle carrier high up on a wharf, maybe 8 feet off the ground. He was supposed to park in a row and start tight to the edge. As soon as one wheel went off the edge, he jumped out, and the straddle carrier fell into the lake. Grandpa went straight into the office and said, "Mr. Brentnall, you might as well fire me. I just put a carrier in the lake." Instead of firing Grandpa, the boss flagged another carrier and made Grandpa drive it right away. He lasted another few years working for Mr. Brentnall.

Grandpa and about eight other young men were sitting on the wharf one day at Great Central Lake. Another guy came along and, trying to be funny, he started pushing everyone in the lake. Grandpa thought, he won't push me in because I can't swim. Unfortunately, the guy doing the pushing didn't know that, so he sent Grandpa swimming with the rest of them. Grandpa sinks like a rock, and luckily his friend, Barney Harlicko knew that. Barney saved Grandpa from drowning by dragging him up on shore and pumping the lake water from his lungs.

Grandpa had a friend he worked with at Great Central Lake. For fun, they would read Ann Landers' newspaper advice columns. The fun came in when they would create situations and write false letters to Ann Landers to see if she would publish them! This guy could write letters like you wouldn't believe. Grandpa can't remember if any were published.

Grandpa earned 57 cents an hour, and worked five 8-hour shifts and four hours on Saturdays. He lived in the bunkhouse with two people to a room, and worked the night shift. When he got off work, he would eat breakfast. Every day, the cook made pancakes that were raw and runny on the inside, and burnt on the outside. He got so fed up that he complained to the cook, who came out of the kitchen and poured a whole bowl of batter on Grandpa's head! The cook was fired shortly



after that, but not before Grandpa was banned from living in the camp over this ordeal. After that, he boarded with a Catholic family while continuing to work at Great Central Lake.

1948 Grandpa's photograph of the sawmill where he worked at Great Central Lake



1947 Grandpa with his camera in Port Alberni

Grandpa didn't have any hobbies, except for taking pictures. He and his friend, Leno Benetton, would go around taking pictures of everything, from boats in the harbour, to pretty girls. In 1947, Grandpa went into Island Farms, an ice cream shop that was like a Dairy Queen today. He took two photographs of the beautiful waitress who served him. He kept the pictures. In those days you had a 12-picture roll of film. Whatever pictures you took, you kept.

Two years later, Grandpa met the same beautiful waitress one evening at the CYO, the Catholic Youth Organization. Well, that sealed the deal. Not only was she beautiful and had access to plenty of ice cream, but she was Catholic too! Grandpa says, anyone else might say, that's just a coincidence. But how many coincidences do you have to have? He still has these original two ice cream shop waitress pictures.



The beautiful Island Farms ice cream shop waitress, Eileen, in 1947

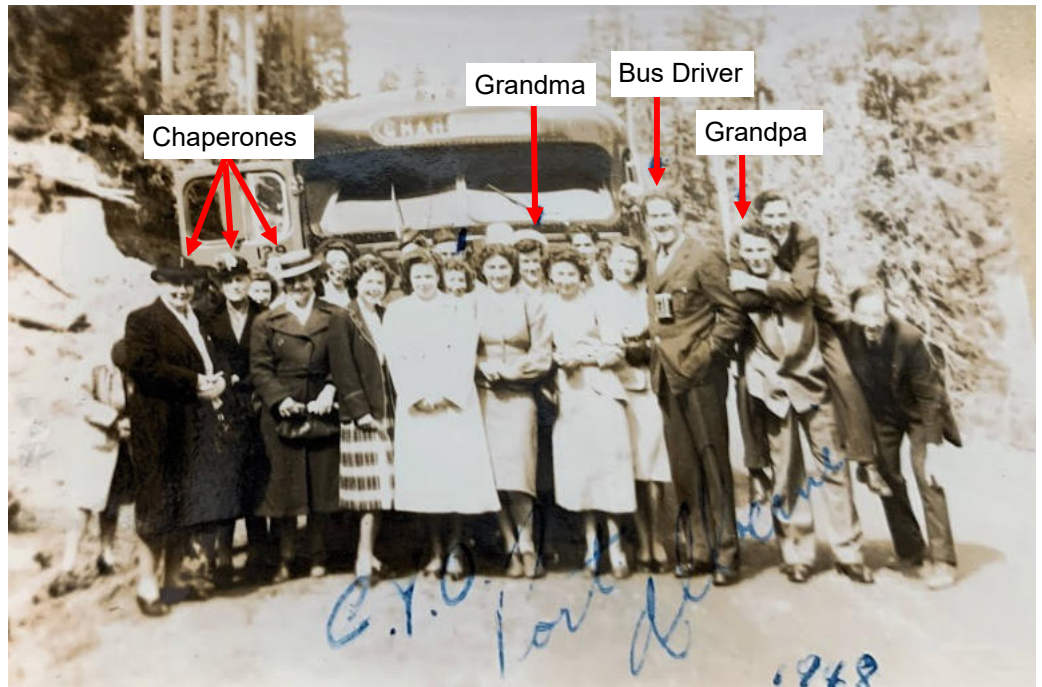
Grandma and Grandpa's Life Together

Grandma and Grandpa officially met at the CYO – The Catholic Youth Organization. When Grandpa was working at the mill at Great Central Lake, and boarding with a Catholic family there, they encouraged him to join the CYO, which met on Sunday nights. Grandma had been going there since she was about fifteen years old. They met in 1948, when Grandma was seventeen years old, and Grandpa was



nineteen. They would go to a movie together, or have coffee at a restaurant. The Coffee Cup was a favourite teen hangout, and they often spent time with the other CYO teens.

Most of the thirty or so members of the CYO got married within the group, or brought their boyfriend or girlfriend to the group and then got married. On Sunday evenings, they said a prayer together, and then had fun. They had dances and played table tennis at the church hall. As a group, they formed a baseball team, and travelled to Qualicum to play. Only the boys played ball, but they had excellent cheerleaders!



CYO outing in Port Alberni 1948

When he started seeing Grandma, Grandpa asked to be transferred from Great Central Lake to Port Alberni, 13 miles away. They agreed to the transfer. He had a good name with the superintendents there, so it was no problem to transfer from the sawmill to the pulp mill.



Catholic Youth Organization baseball team

In 1949, Grandma broke up with Grandpa because he got too serious, and they separated for a few months. Lucky for him, he's pretty stubborn, and eventually Grandpa won her over with his great sense of humour and fun personality. Grandpa said, "She made me wait, but it was worth it!"

Miss Eileen Houle Honored At Shower

One of the larger bridal showers to take place in the Alberni Valley was in honor of Miss Eileen Houle. The shower took place on Friday, May 19 at the Holy Family Parish Hall when over seventy friends of the popular guest of honor were present.

Miss Marie Reider was receptionist for the occasion, while Dora Manson, Kay Paquette and Terry Houle were co-hostesses. Servitours were Mrs. Henry Houle, Mrs. M. Mason and Mrs. Lionel Houle. Miss Eileen Cain and Miss Loucille Ledge entertained with music during the evening.

Cleverly constructed stairs, and a beautifully decorated basket with attractively decorated gifts spilling out on the stairs was the mode of presentation used for the brides-to-be to receive the presents.

Miss Houle will make her marriage vows in the Holy Family Church on June 10 when she becomes the bride of Frank Pighin.

Grandpa proposed to Grandma on Christmas 1949, right after midnight mass. Grandma wasn't surprised; however, she did say that was the best gift she has ever received for Christmas.



Grandma and Grandpa's wedding on June 10th, 1950

One month before her twentieth birthday, Grandma married Grandpa on June 10th, 1950. Not long after, Grandma turned him into an electrician, like four of her brothers and her father.

Grandma's parents looked after organizing the reception. Grandma and Grandpa organized the church part of the wedding. They used Grandma's dad's car. Grandma wore a ballerina dress, which came down to her mid-calf. This was the latest fashion at the time.

Grandpa's parents were quite elderly, so they did not travel to Port Alberni for the wedding. Instead, Grandma and Grandpa went to Rossland to visit Grandpa's family for their honeymoon, and they stayed with Grandpa's sister, Argia.



Grandma and Grandpa on their wedding day

The first place Grandma and Grandpa lived in was an apartment they rented in Port Alberni. It was simple, with a bedroom, living room, kitchen, and bathroom. They had an electric stove, no washer or dryer, and no fridge, but they did have an icebox. After that, they moved into Grandma's parents' basement that was already made into a suite.

They were married about three months before Grandma became pregnant in about September of 1950. She was working in the fabric department at Woodward's, carrying bolts of fabric and lifting them over her head. They were very sad when she miscarried the baby, early on in the pregnancy. They figured it might have happened because of the heavy lifting in her job, so she stopped working at Woodward's.

About three months later, Grandma became pregnant again. They named their first child Garry after Grandpa's best friend and the best man at their wedding, Garry Katrichak. They named my dad Bernie, after the famous Montréal Canadiens forward, Bernie Geoffrion. Their other children were given names that Grandma and Grandpa liked.

Grandma and Grandpa like listening to Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby. They belonged to the Reader's Digest Record Club. They subscribed to get a record a month when they were first married.



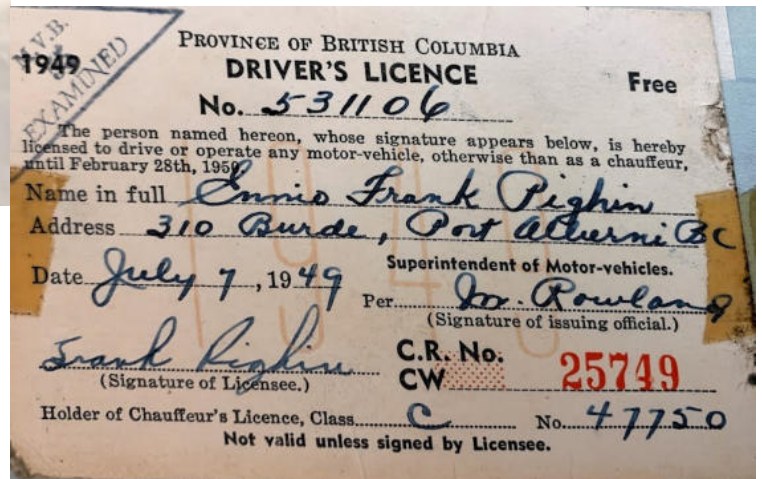
Left to right: Garry, Grandpa, Darlene, and baby Bernie

Grandma learned how to cook a little from her mom, and later in life Grandpa taught her. She learned by default. Grandpa didn't know how to cook, but when he didn't like her cooking, she changed. It's a good thing Grandma had so much patience, because she learned how to cook extremely well without having to pour pancake batter on Grandpa's head!

When they were first married, Grandpa earned about \$1.15 an hour at the pulp mill in Port Alberni. In 1953, Grandpa got into a discussion with hiring manager. He wanted to become an electrician. The manager promised that the next time someone leaves, he'd take Grandpa in to learn to be an apprentice electrician. He then hired someone else, so Grandpa left. He went to work in construction building a pulp mill. After it was built, they kept him on at the mill for five or six years.



The first car they shared was a blue-green Hillman Minx. It was a little, four door, English car. It was well used before they bought it. After that, they had a 1949 Ford Meteor. Grandpa taught Grandma how to drive soon after they got married. Grandma had to learn on a standard. One day when Grandma had her learners' license, they were out practicing driving. I guess Grandpa was a little too hard on her, so she stopped the car, got out, and walked.



Grandpa took a course in carpentry to learn how to build his house. He had a book of house designs, and he chose the largest house in the book. He brought the book to his carpentry teacher, who told him he couldn't build it. Grandpa said that was exactly what he needed to hear, and he soon proved the teacher wrong.



Darlene (front) and Garry (behind) on a plank walkway in front of the house that Grandpa built in Port Alberni



906 Waterhouse Street, Port Alberni, BC.
The 1300 square foot house that Grandpa built.
It has a full basement with suite they rented to Robert
Aller, the famous painter. Total building cost: \$12,500.



Bert pulling Wayne



Grandpa still wanted to apprentice in electrical. Grandma's older brother, Lionel Houle, was an electrician who opened Houle Electric in Port Alberni in 1944, and later expanded across BC. Lionel got a contract in the Arctic. He offered to double Grandpa's wages to move to Inuvik, Northwest Territories, in 1958. Grandpa was making \$1.50 an hour, and Lionel gave him \$2.50 an hour plus overtime and 60 hours a week of work. They needed the money. Grandpa had a good job at the pulp mill, but he had just finished building a house that they couldn't quite afford and they "got behind the eight ball", as Grandpa put it, so they welcomed the opportunity.

Grandpa jokes that it seems as though Grandma had a baby about every nine and a half months, leaving her with six kids when Grandpa went to work in the Arctic. Grandpa spent two years in Inuvik. It was a very tough time for both of them. Luckily, Grandma had help from her own mom to take care of her six children.



Back row: Grandma, Grandpa
Middle row: Bernie, Darlene, Garry
Front row: Bert and Wayne



Inuvik in the Northwest Territories was a town that was just being built. Grandpa and three other men, Larry Houle, Walter Nacbaur, and Mike Krilanoic installed 95% of the electrical wiring in town. They brought everything up by barge from Hay River in the summer - enough to last the winter. It got down to -50°C quite regularly and there was no daylight in the winter.

There was no communication back then – no telephones, and certainly no email. To send a letter took a week. So that's what they did. There was a plane twice a week, and on every plane was a letter, in both directions. I asked if there were any of those letters left. Grandpa said, "I hope they're gone! Grandma was so innocent looking, but when she put pen to paper, there were some hot letters! Those were precious both ways those letters."



Grandpa in Inuvik

There was no time for leisure in Inuvik, just work. Grandpa worked ten-hour days, six days a week. They worked all the extra hours they could at time and a half. Grandma came up to visit Grandpa four months after he left the first time, and she stayed for ten days. She left the kids with her mom. Grandpa visited Grandma and his children every four months. It was an eight hour trip to Edmonton, and then on to Port Alberni from there.

It took a full twenty-four hours to get home. Stupidly, I asked them what they did when they visited each other. Grandpa laughingly replied, "You know what rabbits do? Don't ask that question!" Even though they were apart for so long, Grandpa said he knows one thing for certain: he never cheated on his wife, and she never cheated on him.

When the job finished in Inuvik in December 1959, Grandpa came back home to the pulp mill in Port Alberni for about another 4 years. Everyone was glad to have him home again. By that time, the pulp mill wages were catching up, but they were not at \$2.50 yet.

Between their sons Dean and Marty, Grandma had a second, devastating miscarriage. On the advice of her doctor, Grandma took a new prescription drug called Thalidomide, reported to help pregnant women with morning sickness. Grandma was seven months along in an otherwise good pregnancy, with six healthy children at home, when she miscarried. The doctor said the baby was stillborn and really badly disfigured. He couldn't tell if it was a boy or a girl, so they didn't give it a name. He told them not to look at the baby, so they didn't. They had a burial for the baby in Port Alberni. We now know that Thalidomide led to many thousands of miscarriages, infant deaths, and



severe birth defects. The Thalidomide scandal is regarded as the biggest human-caused medical disaster to date. Thankfully, drug regulations across the world significantly improved due in large part to this tragedy, which affected babies in 46 countries. Remarkably, Thalidomide is currently being used to treat some cancers, skin conditions, and autoimmune diseases.

One day in 1965 Grandma's brother Lionel said, "Why not move to Kamloops to build another pulp mill for \$4.07 an hour?" So they decided to move to Kamloops. Grandpa had only worked there for about 6 weeks when Lionel said, "Hey, I'm thinking of opening a branch of Houle Electric in Prince George. Why don't you and Aline drive there on a weekend and see what you think?" They quite liked Prince George. They had six sons and one daughter born in Port Alberni, and Grandma was pregnant with their last child, Janet, when they made the move. They were very thankful that



Moving away from the house Grandpa built in Port Alberni on Vancouver Island

Grandma's brother, Lionel, gave them the opportunity to work for Houle Electric in Prince George. They have never regretted moving here, even though it snows a lot more in PG.



Grandma and Grandpa's new house at 121 Quinn Street in Prince George, 1965



Snow pile in front of their new house in Prince George

Jerry Bates was already in P.G. working for Lionel, a month or so before Grandpa. A year later Jerry left, but he still worked for Houle quite a bit on and off throughout the years. Lionel doubled Grandpa's wages twice, for which they are very grateful. Grandpa says, "You can't sit on your rear! You have to make moves." They had to give up a new house he had just built himself in Port Alberni to move. The house in PG was new too, but was smaller. Every time Grandma and Grandpa moved, it was very hard, but it was a good change that bettered themselves and their family. It was difficult, but it was worth it.

The family did lots of camping, rain or shine, but mostly in the rain. They also enjoyed plenty of downhill skiing, benefiting from the "family rate". Grandma took time to enjoy baking, sewing, gardening, and trips to the lake, as well as downhill skiing and swimming for hours on end, all of which she was quite good at. Grandma and Grandpa's children have fond memories of "picnics and adventures near Port Alberni, including rock climbing at Upper Roger



Camping in the family tent trailer

Creek off the highway, swimming at River Road Park and Paper Mill Dam and on Sundays going to Sproat Lake with (their) dad. . . . In Prince George, (they went) to Nechako Flats, Salmon Valley, Summit Lake, West Lake, Ten Mile Lake, and Bear Lake. " * quote from Grandma's Eulogy



Grandma skiing



Ski hill

Homemade root beer was famous in the Pighin house. Grandma made it in 2-quart bottles. There is a "mother" starter culture that naturally fermented to make the carbonation. It is a perpetual process where you keep some of it, and continue adding to it to make more. Grandma mostly made

rootbeer when the children were young, and it attracted all the neighbour children as well. When you have eight children, and they all have one friend, that's a lot of kids! Although it probably takes that many kids to drink 2 quarts of root beer before it goes flat! Grandma made delicious lemonade popsicles that were well known amongst the neighbourhood children too.



Grandma hanging laundry using a step ladder before Grandpa built the cement steps

When Grandpa was working, he worked hard with lots of overtime and had extra jobs, but he says that Grandma worked harder than him. Truly. They had no washer and dryer, no fridge, they had a sawdust stove for a while, and then coal for heat overnight, and a wood stove for cooking. They made a huge step up when they bought an oil stove with a tank outside that you only needed to fill once every 2-3 weeks. Oil would feed the furnace and stove as needed. This was a big improvement over the dirty coal dust and the labour needed to gather, chop, and haul wood, never mind having to constantly tend a wood fire.

Grandpa worked at Houle Electric in Prince George for 29 years, from 1965 until he retired in 1994. He never considered doing a different job or moving from PG. At first, Grandma helped out with the bookwork at home. As the children left for school, she started working part-time at Houle in the office. She worked for Houle from 1966 or '67 until about 1992. It was a good job for both of them, and they raised eight children on it. Running a business was a 24-hour-a-day job, but in those days, people worked more than they do today. Grandpa spent about two-thirds of his time in the office and one-third on job sites. He received lots of shocks, but thankfully was never seriously electrocuted.

Ennio & Aline Pighin

Gerard O'Neil	September 5, 1951
Darlene Cecile	September 29, 1952
Bernard Donald	November 20, 1953
Robert Roger	February 4, 1955
Wayne Francis	April 9, 1956
Dean Dennis	October 13, 1958
Martin Joseph	May 14, 1964
Janet Angela	September 20, 1965



Grandma and Grandpa's completed family
Top row, left to right: Darlene, Garry, Bernie

Middle row: Dean, Wayne, Bert

Bottom row: Grandma holding Janet and Grandpa holding Marty



Top row left to right: Darlene, Wayne, Bert, Dean
Bottom row: Grandpa, Janet, Bernie, Garry, Marty, Grandma



Leaning Tower of Pisa, Italy 1975



Canals in Venice, Italy 1975

In 1975, Grandma and Grandpa took a trip to visit Grandpa's birthplace in Udine, Italy and to Rome. They went with Grandpa's sisters, Argia and Babs. Grandpa enjoyed seeing some world-famous architecture that is very old. The two photographs above were taken by Grandpa.

In 1977, Grandma and Grandpa took a trip across Canada with Marty and Janet in their truck and camper. Grandma swam in each one of the Great Lakes while driving their truck and camper across Canada. Grandpa remembers Marty teaching Janet math while they were travelling.



Marty, Grandpa, and Janet at Niagara Falls



Grandpa, Marty, and Grandma with their truck and camper



Marty, Janet, and Grandma on their trip across Canada

On a trip to Victoria in 1978 with Marty and Janet, Marty wasn't feeling himself and became quite grouchy and irritable. They decided to put him on a bus and send him home early. Soon after he was diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes. Once his blood sugars were stabilized with insulin, his mood improved and he became reasonable again.

Grandma and Grandpa continued to travel to local campsites while they also travelled abroad. We have many fond memories of multiple Pighin and Houle family reunions and trips to Plato Island Resort on Quesnel Lake where we enjoyed large family gatherings.



Our personal bagpiper, Les Parton, leading us to dinner while camping at Plato Island Resort



Grandpa and Aunty Lauren at the beach near Plato Island Resort on Quesnel Lake



Pighin family reunion in 1994

In 1994, we had a Pighin Family Reunion at the West Lake Boy Scout Camp, near Prince George. We all wore colour-coordinated t-shirts to distinguish Grandpa's siblings' families from one another. Grandma and Grandpa's offspring and in-laws wore blue shirts and had the most family members there.



Left to right: Grandma, Grandpa, Grandpa's sister Argia, Grandpa's brother Andy's wife Dina, and Grandpa's sister Limbania (Babs)



Grandpa and Grandma on the beach in Barbados

In 1995 Grandma and Grandpa vacationed in Barbados. Grandpa said they liked Barbados very much, with one exception—they drive on the wrong side of the street! He would still recommend vacationing in Barbados because they have beautiful beaches and very nice people there.

In the year 2000, Grandma, Grandpa, and Aunty Darlene visited Hawaii.



An active lava flow in Hawaii



Darlene and Grandma on a beach in Hawaii, 2000



Grandma with their first motorhome and tow car in 1993

In later life, Grandma and Grandpa thoroughly enjoyed travelling to the United States and Mexico for winter vacations with Grandma's brothers and sisters in-law. "This began in 1984 and lasted for over 30 years" * quote from eulogy. They enjoyed spending time in their motorhome, and visited with relatives on all of their vacations. They went South with the other Houle boys, Neil, Don, Roger and Larry, until they were gone, and then with Dennis and Helen. Grandpa en-



Grandpa on the golf course

joyed many "discussions" about politics, and life in general, with Aunty Helen, and still does when they get together.

They often went to Hemet, California, which is southeast of LA. They also went to Indio California and to Arizona, just south of Phoenix. They were always looking for good RV Parks with a golf course nearby for the men and a swimming pool for Grandma. Grandma also enjoyed taking aqua-fit classes and picking fresh citrus fruit to eat.



Grandma in their first motorhome



Grandma loved fresh citrus fruit

They travelled south one month every year from the beginning of January until February, dependent on the weather in Prince George. They played lots of horseshoes on their travels. Grandma would enjoy swimming while Grandpa played golf. They travelled south annually, until about 2017.

Luckily, they always carried health insurance when they travelled in the USA. One time in Hemet California around 2010, Grandpa passed out after dinner. They called an ambulance to take him to the hospital. They did a bunch of tests and found nothing wrong with him. The hospital bill was \$36,000 USD. After all that, they figure he must have passed out due to dehydration. Grandpa had golfed all day, didn't drink any water, and had some drinks with Tony before dinner. That was an expensive mistake Grandpa was glad he didn't have to pay for!

On one of their winter vacations to California, Grandma started acting strangely. She didn't seem normal, but she was active. Grandpa thought she hadn't taken her vitamin B12, so that's what he thought was bothering her. He contacted a nurse who gave her a shot of B12. Now B12 is available in pill form, so nobody takes it by injection anymore. After that, Grandpa got Grandma to drive the car to her sister Cecile's place. He said he shouldn't have done that. He realized once they got home that Grandma had had a stroke. Thankfully, she drove safely. It's one of his biggest regrets in life that he didn't realize earlier and get her medical attention. Of course, it's not his fault he didn't know, as strokes present differently in women than they do in men. When they got home from that trip, they went down south two more times in the motorhome, and they flew down once to visit Dennis in California. After that, they vacationed closer to home. After the stroke, Grandma worked less as she had trouble finishing things she started in the office.



Grandma with their second motorhome vacationing in the United States

In their later retirement years, Grandma and Grandpa travelled all over BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, the lower mainland, and North as far as Inuvik. They travelled with friends, Gerry and Jewel Bates. Their first trip with Gerry and Jewel was to Dawson City, and their second trip was to the Al-

berta oil sands and Fort McMurray. Grandma and Grandpa's children made arrangements for a helicopter to take them and the Bateses over the oil sands operations and over the reclaimed land, which Grandma and Grandpa thought looked very natural. From there they went to Waterton Lakes National Park, below Calgary. They came back through the Kicking Horse Pass, and stopped in Roseland to visit relatives. They stopped at Dean's in Kelowna, and then went home. On another trip they went to Dawson City, then carried on to the prairies. They visited many Houle relatives in the prairies.

Vacations were always carefully planned. They made arrangements for where they would stay and who they would visit along the way. In 2016, Janet arranged for Grandma and Grandpa, along with the Bateses, to park in a hotel parking lot at the airport in Fort McMurray. The hotel treated them very well. They had a section of the parking lot ready for them so nobody would park there, allowed them to plug in to power, and they even supplied breakfast! That hotel burned down in the big forest fire when it was only one or two years old.

They also went down the Sunshine Coast with the Bateses and it rained the whole time. They went over to Vancouver Island to visit Bert and Garry, and they travelled all over the island. Just north of Qualicum, in Comox, they took the ferry to the sawmill on the mainland at the top end of the Sunshine Coast in Powell River.

After visiting with one of Grandpa's nieces in Dawson City, Grandpa spent his 75th birthday outside Inuvik on their way to Fairbanks, Alaska in 2003. It was quite a birthday party with Dennis and Helen Houle (Grandma's brother and sister-in-law) and friends. They took the "Top of the World Highway", which was good in Canada, but not well maintained in Alaska. A good time was had by all, and Grandpa claims he "kept his head about him and didn't drink too much", compared to the younger party-goers!



Grandpa's 75th birthday in Inuvik, 2003



Grandma and Grandpa in Alaska, 2003

After his retirement, Grandpa did volunteer work. There was a Protestant Minister, Peter Zimmer, from St. Michael's Church, who used to come to St. Mary's Church to receive Communion. He got to know Grandpa from this. Peter worked at Shepherd's Corner and recruited Grandpa to volunteer there. Shepherd's Corner is an inner-city ministry run by the Roman Catholic Diocese of PG that offers temporary, daytime shelter for the homeless and poor. It provides a listening, compassionate, welcoming presence to people of all backgrounds and faiths. Grandpa volunteered there four hours a day, three days a week, later reduced to two days a week, for nearly ten years. He served coffee and doughnuts and listened to the patrons' struggles.

Father Gilbert Bertrand, OMI (Oblate of Mary Immaculate) was the Priest at St. Mary's Parish for seven years, from 2015 to 2022. Soon after he arrived at St. Mary's Parish, Grandpa introduced himself to Father Gilbert and invited him to stop by the house for a glass of wine and a visit. One afternoon, Father Gilbert was feeling apt to drop in, so he knocked on the door. It was open, so he asked, "Is this a good time for a glass of wine?" Grandma replied, "Father, any time is a good time for a glass of wine!" This began their friendship.

Father Gilbert was often invited to Grandma and Grandpa's house for meals and gatherings throughout the years. In fact, when asked to describe Grandpa and Grandma, "their hospitality" was the first thing that Father Gilbert thought of. I would agree that they seem to enjoy hosting family and friends in their kitchen, living room, and they especially enjoy the outdoor seating area behind the carport.



There is a group of about 8-10 people who regularly attend weekday Mass who became friends. Occasionally after weekday Mass, Grandpa would invite this small group and Father Gilbert over for breakfast or coffee and muffins. Sister Irene, Sister Dot, and Henriette are a few of the weekday parishioners who get together. Grandpa even continued inviting this group over after Grandma passed away. Father Gilbert describes Grandma and Grandpa as "a team who worked well together". After Grandma's stroke, Grandpa took over cooking all the meals. Grandpa says he just does what he's told and gives the credit to Grandma.





St. Mary's Catholic Church; image from Facebook profile

Father Gilbert describes Grandpa as “very involved in the life of the church” and “helpful”. For example, “Grandpa saw that the pews needed re-screwing, so he just did it and told Father about it afterward.”

Grandpa was involved in the Funeral Ministry. He was the cross bearer and handled the chalice and incense during funeral services. Grandpa believes that funerals are not for the dead; they are for the living. Father Gilbert said Grandpa “carried the cross with care and great dignity, and he was proud to serve and minister to bereaved families in this way”.

Grandpa is also a Eucharistic Minister. Being a Eucharistic Minister means that the Priest deemed him to be a decent person and that he underwent some training. This enables Grandpa to give out Holy Communion at church, and he can take Communion to sick and shut-in parishioners. Grandpa gave Grandma Holy Communion regularly at home later in her life when she wasn't able to get out of the house as much. Father Gilbert says that Grandpa served Mass regularly – one week a month. Grandpa would set up the altar for Mass. He would bring the gifts including the bread, wine, and water to the Priest at the correct times. Grandpa faithfully served at Mass for many decades. He still attends church five days a week, although he retired from serving at Mass in 2024 at age 96.

Father Gilbert describes Grandpa as “a faithful man who is always positive”. He says hospitality is a huge part of both Grandma and Grandpa's personalities, and they are a team. He describes Grandma as “quiet”, because he met her after her stroke. Father Gilbert enjoyed Grandma's garden, raspberries, and her flowers, as well as her recipes, which were the only way he tasted her cooking. Father Gilbert had a standard poodle named Ginger. When he brought Ginger with him to visit Grandma and Grandpa, Ginger would go straight to Grandma to sit by her side, every time. Ginger must have sensed what a kind and trustworthy person she was.



Grandma's flowers, raspberry bushes, and garden squashes



Grandma and Grandpa with their offspring and spouses on their 60th Wedding Anniversary 2010

Christmas is always a time for a big family get-together. For the past few decades, we've found that renting a hall and turning Christmas dinner into a potluck works well. Everyone is always welcome, and because many of the extended family share the holidays with their in-laws, the turnout is usually between 35-65 people. We're



Pighin Family Christmas dinner



The Port Alberni Knights of Columbus in 1954

Father Gilbert remembers how much Grandma and Grandpa looked forward to the big gatherings of the family for celebrations, and how proud they are of their large family in the portrait we took on the steps of the University for their 60th and 65th Wedding Anniversaries. Since then, the family has grown even more to include 40 great-grandchildren (in 2025), added to the 22 grandchildren and 8 children.

always excited when there are new family members who get to experience a Pighin family Christmas dinner for the first time.

Grandpa was a member of the Knights of Columbus since 1954. Father Gilbert said Grandpa didn't attend many meetings, as he was busy running a business and raising 8 children, but he was there when they needed him. He helped the Knights take the collection at church services, and he spent weekends selling tickets as fundraisers for them.

On February 10, 2017, Grandpa was given a second chance at life. About a foot of snow fell overnight, and it was still snowing. Grandpa started shovelling his driveway at 7 am. He got to the end of the driveway and collapsed. Judy Blishen, from two houses down just happened to be driving by moments after and saw him lying there. She stopped to see if he was okay. He was unresponsive, so she called 911. First responders were extremely quick and had him in the ambulance by 7:20 am. Janet was called by another neighbour and arrived shortly after that. The paramedics worked on Grandpa for 45 minutes before transporting him to the hospital. Janet drove Grandma to the hospital following the ambulance. Grandpa was hooked up to life support in the trauma room of the ER. Then the family was allowed to stand beside him. They talked to Grandpa and told him that he was strong and a fighter and that he couldn't leave yet because they needed him here and he had to pull through. Grandma was rubbing his arm and talking to him. She was very worried and had tears in her eyes. The doctor told them it didn't look good and prepared them for the worst. More family members were called, as was Father Gilbert. Thankfully, at about 10 or 11 am Grandpa's heart started to work on its own and the machine shut down. The nurse said, "I think he was listening to you."

Dr. Khara, the Internist from ICU, checked him over. She asked about Grandpa's final wishes and told the family the risks of what had just happened. She decided to shut down all machines and medications to see if he could hold his own. They needed him to wake up and it was important he did so within the first 48-72 hours. Dr. Khara sent Grandpa for a head scan to detect any bleeding in the brain. Meanwhile, the doctor asked the family to discuss what to do in the worst-case scenario. They



Grandma and Grandpa 2003

got Bert and Garry on the phone, as well as Bernie, who was on a cruise ship at the time. They called Grandpa's Family Physician, Dr. Ferreira to find out if Grandpa had spoken to him about any final wishes. He said no.

There was no blood detected in Grandpa's brain, so they ruled out a stroke and were now thinking it was a heart attack. They moved Grandpa into ICU and put a shunt in his main artery in his neck to his heart in case they needed to insert the wiring to keep his heart going. Father Gilbert came to the hospital. He said the Lord's Prayer and gave Grandpa Communion.

Around 3 pm Grandpa opened his eyes and was responsive to the nurses. It was the best news ever! The family was allowed to see him once again. Grandma looked so relieved and happy to be at Grandpa's side. Grandpa was trying to talk, but he still had the breathing apparatus down his throat.

Dr. Hadi, a Cardiologist, scheduled him for a pacemaker operation within 15 minutes. Dr. Khara told the family that it was not a heart attack and that it was Sick Sinus Syndrome, which is a mal-

function of the wiring in the heart. The family was allowed a few minutes with Grandpa before they took him in to surgery. The Anaesthesiologist took one look at Grandpa and took the tubes out so he could breathe on his own. They did the operation under local anaesthesia. Everyone was relieved when they learned that the operation was a success. He had no recollection of the whole day, other than going out to shovel.

At 8:30 am the next morning, Grandpa was alert and wanted to go home. It was a magical moment when Grandpa and Grandma saw each other. They leaned in for a hug, but Grandma wasn't sure how to hug him because of all the wires and tubes. Then Grandpa called Grandma "My Love". It was a precious moment. Many family members spent the day at the hospital. Grandpa made it clear to the doctors that he wanted to go home, but Dr. Khara said probably a few more days. Then Dr. Hadi came to check on him and his new pacemaker and said everything looked amazing. He told Grandpa that if he got up and started walking around that afternoon, he could go home the next day. Grandpa was very happy with this news and immediately started doing laps with the nurse. The family had dinner at Grandma and Grandpa's house, now with most of the out-of-town relatives included.

On Sunday, February 12th, 2017, Grandpa was given the okay to leave the hospital after only two and a half days. Grandpa joined his family for lunch at his house. They had family pictures taken, and enjoyed a wonderful afternoon. Dean, Lauren, Bert, Shaan, and Garry all stayed at Grandma and Grandpa's house that night. The following day was Family Day, and everyone was grateful to have the family intact again.

In February 2018, Grandpa celebrated his first birthday of his second chance at life. He continued this new tradition for seven years. Father Gilbert told the story that, "a year after Frank's heart attack, he summoned all his children home and called it his first birthday!" Varying reports emerged about the exact number of wine bottles the family enjoyed during that first birthday celebration!

Grandpa is proud to say that his pacemaker hasn't worked much since it was put in. Pacemakers normally last only ten years, but his is currently only fifty percent used up after eight years. His doctor says it



Grandma and Grandpa with their children on their 65th Anniversary, 2015
Top row left to right: Bernie, Wayne, Garry
Middle row: Dean, Darlene, Bert
Bottom row: Janet, Grandpa, Grandma, Marty



Grandma and Grandpa on Grandpa's 90th Birthday, 2018

has enough power left to last another seven years.

Grandpa says it changes a person to experience a medical emergency like this one. If Judy had driven by only ten minutes later, Grandpa would not be with us today. Luckily, he had the right people at the right time. He appreciates having been brought back to life. He says he felt so good afterwards. He went out shopping at Costco only two days later to buy a big roast for the family. He felt like it was an impromptu family reunion, for which he was very grateful. Grandpa thinks he passed out from shovelling because he was dehydrated, similar to what happened in California a few years earlier. He didn't have breakfast or drink any water before going outside to shovel that fateful day.

In 2019, the world was rocked by the Covid-19 pandemic. Grandma and Grandpa accepted Covid. They had lived through measles and mumps. Grandpa's mother told them about the Spanish Flu, which hit Italy around 1918, ten years before Grandpa was born. At that time, the government had officers enforcing social restrictions. They would go out at night, and if there were lights on anywhere, they would walk in to find out what was going on. If people died, they were taken out

right away and buried. There were no medications or vaccinations back then.

Grandpa's life and legacy are so revered by our family that his grandchildren respect him almost as if he were a religious leader. Brittany, Tammy, and I each asked him to perform a reading of the poem, "Hands of the Bride and Groom" at our weddings. Another granddaughter, Sonya, even asked



Grandma and Grandpa with their grandchildren on Grandpa's 90th birthday

Grandpa to perform her wedding ceremony. Grandpa talked to his priest at the time, who said he can't actually marry her, but one way to get around that is to give the Family's Blessing. Grandpa fulfilled Sonya's request, performed her wedding ceremony, and gave the Family's Blessing.

On June 10, 2020 Grandma and Grandpa celebrated their 70th Wedding Anniversary. Janet had booked a hall and planned for a large gathering, but due to Covid they had to change the celebration to an outdoor drive-by parade at Grandma and Grandpa's house. Grandma and Grandpa, all eight of their children and their spouses enjoyed dinner at tables spread six feet apart on the driveway. All the grandkids and great-grand kids participated in the parade. Drive-by celebrations were a newfound way to celebrate birthdays and other social celebrations during Covid when indoor gatherings were prohibited to limit the spread of the pandemic. There were maybe 25-30 cars in a slow procession up and down Quinn Street, pausing to drop Anniversary cards and flowers on the driveway. Janet even arranged to have a couple of ambulances join the vehicle procession, seeing as the paramedics saved Grandpa's life just three years earlier. Even though it wasn't the celebration we had hoped for, there were plenty of cheers, waves, and ear-to-ear grins. At this time, Grandma was still walking independently. It was shortly after that Grandma's health started declining.

Attending church was affected by Covid as well. St. Mary's had a Mass on Sundays which was livestreamed with only clergy present. After watching Mass on their TV, Grandma and Grandpa would then drive to the church where they gave out Communion as a drive-by. Parishioners stayed in their cars. There was a priest on either side of the car and they gave Communion wearing masks. This lasted about half a year. When they started going back inside the church, they respected the six foot rule. There were pieces of white tape on the pews to show people how far apart to sit. That went on for about three months. After that, they could sit normally again, although disinfecting continued.

Meet the platinum Pighins

Frank and Aline Pighin have just celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary – also known as a platinum anniversary. Platinum, as a precious metal, is more expensive than gold and its chemical and physical properties make it 10 times rarer than gold.

Kathy Nadalin
Jun 10, 2020 8:39 AM



Frank and Aline Pighin

Grandma's decline was gradual and lasted for over a year. Grandpa started taking on more responsibilities around the house. They had always helped each other, but the last year, especially the last six months of Grandma's life, was especially difficult for Grandpa. He said he was getting worn out. He was not wishing she would go, but he was getting pretty tired. One day, Grandpa told Janet, "Grandma's not going to make Christmas." Grandma knew, and she was ready. Grandpa was with Grandma 24/7. Grandpa said, "she wasn't thinking of earthly things anymore, she was thinking of things beyond earth. That's natural."

When they were waiting for an ambulance to take Grandma to Hospice, Janet, Darlene, and Grandpa wheeled Grandma around the house and yard in her wheelchair. They walked around outside, looked at everything, and reminisced a bit. Grandma stopped taking her medications. They asked her what she would like to drink, and her answer was Rum and Coke, so they all had one. That was the last thing she ate or drank at home.

Grandpa brought the large, framed photograph of the whole family seated on the steps inside UNBC with them to Hospice. He told the staff to expect at least that many visitors. They gathered up extra chairs for us, and some of us simply sat on the floor of her room. Grandma ate a big supper at Hospice. She fell asleep that night and never regained full consciousness. Garry and Terrie got on the road and drove through the night to come see Grandma. They got into a car accident and both



Grandma and Grandpa with their offspring and their spouses on Grandpa's 90th birthday, 2018

ended up with broken backs. Once they were stabilized in the ER, they FaceTimed Grandma in Hospice. It was explained to her that Garry was in an accident and couldn't make it. An hour and a half after Garry phoned, she passed away. It was as if she were holding out to hear from each one of her eight children before leaving Earth. She passed away peacefully on September 15th, 2022, with many family members by her side. Grandma had a traditional Catholic funeral at St. Mary's Church.

Grandma and Grandpa talked about their end of life for several years before her passing. They bought a double urn four or five years before she passed away and wrote instructions for their children. Grandma's ashes are now in her half of the urn, and the urn is kept in their bedroom on their dresser, waiting for when they will be reunited. Grandpa says that saying goodbye to Grandma is the biggest change he has ever experienced. When you've been married seventy-two years, losing your wife is hard to get over. Grandpa still misses Grandma very much every day.

At the time of finalizing this updated version of the biography, Grandma has been in Heaven for three years now. Grandpa misses her dearly, but he knows she's in a better place. He has large photographs of her in the house – on the fridge, on the fireplace, and beside his bed. Grandpa says he throws kisses at the pictures of Grandma all day. He also mentions her in his prayers regularly, asking God to take good care of her until he can be together with her again.

Grandma's eulogy was written collaboratively by Grandpa, their children and their spouses. I think the following lines from her eulogy sum up Grandma succinctly:

"Everyone who met her loved her immediately. Even animals were drawn to her magnetic personality. Our mom was tireless in her compassion, patience, and helping with anything that needed to be done for her family, her church, and as a member of the Catholic Women's League. Humility, charity, and the love of God showered all who knew her. She was a woman of courage and faith in every situation. Mom never complained or blamed and she never said a negative word about anyone. Strength, composure, and grace are her legacy. We have all lost an angel; but our loss is Heaven's gain."

Grandpa was astonished at the beautiful cards and letters he received in response to Grandma's passing. The grandkids wrote memories of her to share. Grandpa said, everything that's said in those papers are true, and that's what he loves about her. Grandpa didn't realize half of those



The photograph of Grandma used for her funeral and obituary that Grandpa throws kisses at

things going on at the time. What she was doing, for example, with the neighbour's kids, didn't interest him at the time, but now he knows how special Grandma was in the hearts and lives of so many people. Grandpa says, "She's twice the person I am!" referring to Grandma. "She prayed a hell of a lot more than I did. Mostly it was, 'Dear Father, please don't let the kids do that again!'"

In 2022 Grandpa lost three ladies he calls his best friends. First, he lost his sister, Argia, in February at 101 years old. Then he lost his friend and sister-in-law, Louise Houle (Lionel's wife), in May. She was 99. Argia and Louise didn't have church funerals due in part to changing Covid regulations regarding limits on the number of people allowed in indoor gatherings near the time of their deaths. Grandpa says it's harder to lose someone without a church funeral because you have to say

goodbye in your own way. Then, as he says, he "lost his dear wife, Aline" in September. She was 92 years old. Thankfully, Covid regulations lifted and we were able to have a church funeral for Grandma to say goodbye properly. Catholics have prayers the night before the funeral. This is important because generally the casket is open. When it closes, that's when you say goodbye.

After Grandma's passing, Father Aruldhas sent a condolence letter to Grandpa that he held onto. It says "The right way is your way. No one else is you. The best way to move through this time of grief is in your own way." Grandpa appreciated this good advice, although he still misses Grandma very much every day.



Grandma's sister Cecile, Grandma, Grandpa, Grandpa's sister Argia, and Grandma's brother Dennis at Grandpa's 90th Birthday on June 23, 2018

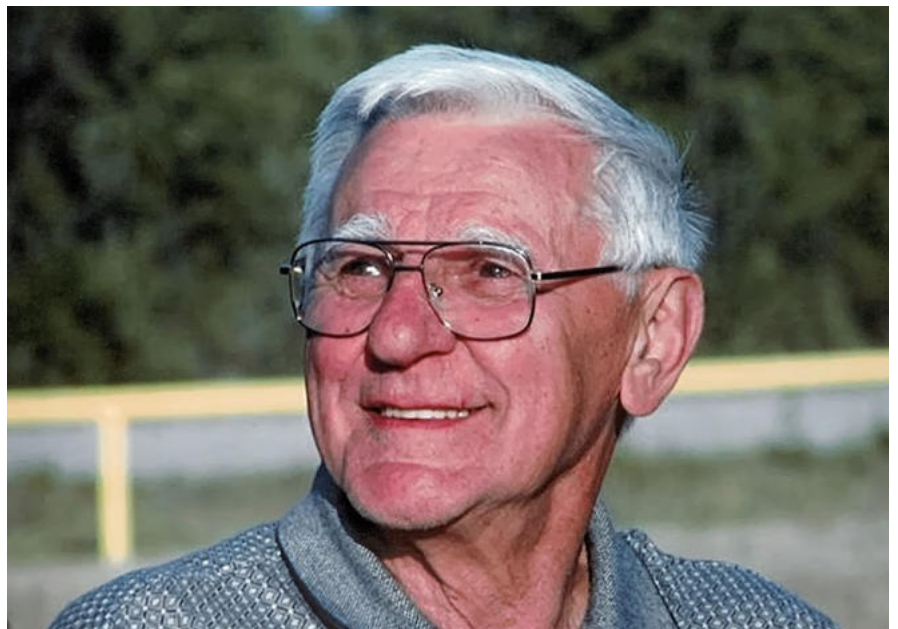
In 2024, Grandpa had an out-of-the-blue idea. He started saying to his kids, I have an 8-point program! I want to make a dinner for each of your families, one per month. It started out by birth order, but Gary became last instead of first because he was building a house. Grandpa wanted to do all the work to supply the entire meal, including the wine – we weren't to bring anything. He made a big dinner for each of his children, their partner, their children, and their partners. He made it clear that he couldn't include the great-grandchildren because that made the dinner gatherings too large for his house. It took him less than a year to get through the whole family. He hosted the first dinner in April and the last one was in November 2024. Grandpa offered his best dishes: spaghetti, ribs, or meatloaf as the choice of entrée for each family. He included a salad and three vegetables with each dinner. The majority of families chose spaghetti for their dinner. Every family got to choose which date worked best during their month. Grandpa said he doesn't measure anything when he's cooking - he just shakes a bunch of spices from the cupboard. He doesn't use a recipe either. Hosting eight large family dinners in a year is an amazing feat for anyone, especially when they're in their mid-90's!

In June 2024, between all those family dinners, Grandpa decided he wanted to go for a ten day road trip by himself to visit friends and family in the United States and on Vancouver Island. Some of his kids said, “Dad, you can’t do that! You’re 96!” Grandpa said, “I get all kinds of advice. I told them: the car’s been there before, I remember it well, I have GPS, and I have The Big Guy with me. How can I go wrong?”

To prove to his kids he could do it, Grandpa agreed to follow Dean and Nicole on a shorter trip to Kelowna. He followed Dean on the way down and they took the long road through McBride to Kelowna. Then he followed Nicole on the way back to PG. Coming back it was Sunday, and he likes going to church on Sundays, so Nicole went with him to church. They drove most of the way home together.

Once Grandpa completed that trip, he was all set for his road trip alone. Grandpa drove from PG to Hope, and then carried on to see Grandma’s sister Cecile, in Bremerton the following day. Bremerton is south of the US border near Seattle. He stayed there for a day and a half. Then he took the ferry across to Vancouver Island to visit his son Bert, in Chemainus, son Garry, in Port Alberni, and nephew Norm Houle, in Victoria. Garry took him up to look at the footings of the house he was building. Then, he visited his sister-in-law, Shirley, and her daughter, Wendy. Grandpa picked up Dora Katricheck (Grandma’s cousin and close friend) and brought Dora to visit Shirley. Although Shirley wasn’t feeling well that day, Wendy put up a lovely lunch anyway. From there, Grandpa went downtown Vancouver to visit Father Gilbert where he’s now semi-retired and working as the Director of the Oblate Retirement Residence where he lives. Grandpa visited with Father Gilbert for the afternoon. He saw Dennis and Helen Houle for supper and stayed the night, and then drove himself home again. He said it was pleasant trip overall.

Grandpa said that when he’s driving, he can go forever. There’s nobody to argue politics with. He turns on the radio when he wants, and meditates while driving. He went through a lot of farmland and blueberry land, and saw thousands of plants, as well as some ancient trees. He really enjoyed the whole trip, especially his visits with relatives.



Later that year, in September 2024, Grandpa went on another trip. This time he went with Wayne and Marilyn to Bella Coola. Grandpa drove “the drive of hell”, as he calls it. The 19-mile hill was in good shape, but is notorious for its steep grades, sharp curves, narrow lanes, switchbacks, steep cliffs, and lack of guardrails. This mountain highway drops 4,020 feet in elevation over 19.4 km. It’s a good thing Grandpa has 80 years of driving experience!

About a month after that, Grandpa tripped and fell when he was straightening the raspberry stalks in the garden. He's not sure whether he hit his head, or how long he might have been lying there. About 4 or 5 weeks later, on November 6th, 2024, Grandpa experienced an excruciating headache. It only got worse, so he went to Emergency. They did a CT scan, ECG, and some bloodwork, which revealed a small bleed in his brain. He'd had a stroke, possibly caused by the fall a few weeks earlier. He was admitted to hospital overnight. They repeated the ECG and CT scan the following day, and there was no change, so they discharged him on November 7th.

Remember that impressive 8-point plan? He had completed it just days before.



The next day, he had slurry speech and couldn't make sentences, so he went back to Emergency. A CT scan showed the blood spot was shrinking, but it may have shifted and was now touching the area of the brain that affects speech and writing. The Neurosurgeon, reassured him he should get better in one or two weeks. They suggested he would be more comfortable at home being monitored, and discharged him from the hospital. Janet and Bernie took turns staying with Grandpa twenty-four hours a day.

On November 9th, he was only able to speak two words in the morning, and by 4:30 pm he was speaking in sentences again. Over the next few days he suffered headaches, had some speech impediments, and the left side of his face felt funny.

Grandpa in a hospital bed at UHNBC

By November 14th, he went back to Emergency with a headache and high blood pressure readings on his home blood pressure monitor. Dr. Eisbrenner prescribed him a new blood pressure medication, recommended two extra-strength Tylenol every six hours, blood pressure readings four times a day, and sent him home.

From November 16th to 19th, Grandpa was still having some trouble forming words and sentences at times, and he rested a lot.

On November 20th, Grandpa spent twelve hours in Emergency. That morning, Grandpa seemed confused, had trouble speaking, and he appeared to lack facial control when eating. He had another ECG, CT scan, and blood



Grandpa in UHNBC hospital after his stroke

work. The Internal Medicine Specialist spoke with the Neurosurgery team in Vancouver to discuss the CT scan results. They concluded that the CT scan had improved since the last one, but there was a bit of inflammation pressing against the part of the brain that was causing the problems. They discharged him at 10 pm under twenty-four hour supervision and the instruction that if anything changes they are to bring him back. Janet and Bernie continued to take turns staying with Grandpa.

November 21st was a difficult day. He was really having trouble with his speech, and the right side of his face wasn't working when he was eating.

By November 22nd, Grandpa was admitted back to hospital. This time, Bernie and Janet called 911 because his face was drooping, he had trouble with motor skills on the right side of his face and his right arm. He couldn't zip up his jacket or make sentences. At 1am they moved him to a private room in the Internal Medicine Unit.

On November 23rd at 11:30 am, Grandpa had a seizure in the hospital. They gave him Ativan to prevent more seizures and ordered another CT scan. The scan revealed that his brain had shifted over about 1.5 mm due to the inflammation and there was a slight 2 mm bleed, which could have been caused by the seizure which just reopened the previous bleed. Grandpa started using his left hand to eat, and was doing well with that. They put seizure cushion guards up as a precaution.

Grandpa was able to say, "hi" on the morning of November 24th. This was an improvement. A Physiotherapist and an Occupational Therapist were in to set him up with a walker and help him walk down the hall. The doctor was very impressed by his progress. He said a few more words throughout the day. When he was getting frustrated that his words weren't coming out correctly, he blurted out, "I know the words!". Everyone laughed. He walked around the ward before bed. This was much better than yesterday.

November 25th was an even better day. Grandpa was feeling much better, and he was able to start to form words. Grandpa saw an OT, Physio, and a Speech and Swallow Therapist. He was offered the choice to stay in the Internal Medicine Unit or apply to move to the Rehabilitation Unit. The IMU had longer visiting hours, but Rehab had access to more therapists and therapy equipment. Grandpa didn't hesitate to decide. He set his mind on getting better and requested the move to Rehab.



His children signed Grandpa out of the hospital for an evening to bring him home for a family dinner. Left to right: Linda, Bernie, Darlene, Janet, Grandpa, Wayne, Bert, Shaan



The dinner to welcome Grandpa home after his release from the hospital.
 Standing: Marilyn, Wayne, Bernie. Sitting: Darlene, Shaan, Ayva, Bert, Linda, Grandpa, Janet. Sitting on the floor: Lauren, Dean, Tammy

On November 27th, 2024, Grandpa was moved to the Rehab Unit in the hospital. He couldn't write or even say his own name when he went into Rehab. He said he "knew the words he wanted to say, right to the tip of his tongue, but all that came out was gibberish." The staff in Rehab were excellent; they got him walking and talking again, giving him back his independence. The doctors and therapists were all pleased with Grandpa's progress throughout his rehabilitation and released him twenty days later on December 17th. We were so thankful to have Grandpa home in time for Christmas.

Grandpa was told by his Family Physician, Dr. Ferreira, not to drive for six months from the date of his stroke. Miraculously, Dr. Ferreira was so impressed with Grandpa's recovery that he gave Grandpa his driver's license back five weeks early! This is a testament to the hard work Grandpa put into building back his speech, strength, and coordination, and is no surprise to those of us who know his determined work ethic. Just try to tell him he can't, and he'll become determined to prove you wrong! Remember that beautiful woman he wanted to marry and have a family with, who broke it off with him? Remember the house he was told by his carpentry teacher that he couldn't build? How about the time he was passed over for promotion to become a journeyman electrician? Not only did he become an electrician, he ran a successful electrical business for 29 years with a grade 7 education! Remember when his children told him he couldn't take himself on a road trip across BC, all over Vancouver Island, and into the United States for ten days, alone, at 96? He enjoyed that trip immensely.

Once again, the odds were against him learning to walk and talk again at 96 years old, and yet he shared all these additions to his biography with me after recovering from being unable to speak. Just try to convince him he can't do something, and he'll be more determined to do exactly that. It's said that life is ten percent what happens to you, and ninety percent how you choose to respond. Grandpa shows us, through his life's examples, how to make the best of what life throws at you, and he encourages us to do the same.



Grandpa posing in his driveway with his driver's license and his car on his 97th birthday, June 30th 2025

When he was sick, Grandpa's kids all helped him out a lot, for which he is extremely grateful. Dean and Lauren were here for a week. Bert and Shaan came up for the next week. His kids in town were there for him all the time, right up until he could drive again, which was almost five months. Wayne came over once or twice a week and helped with odd jobs. Bernie and Janet took turns monitoring him twenty-four hours a day in the beginning, and were with him a lot throughout. They took

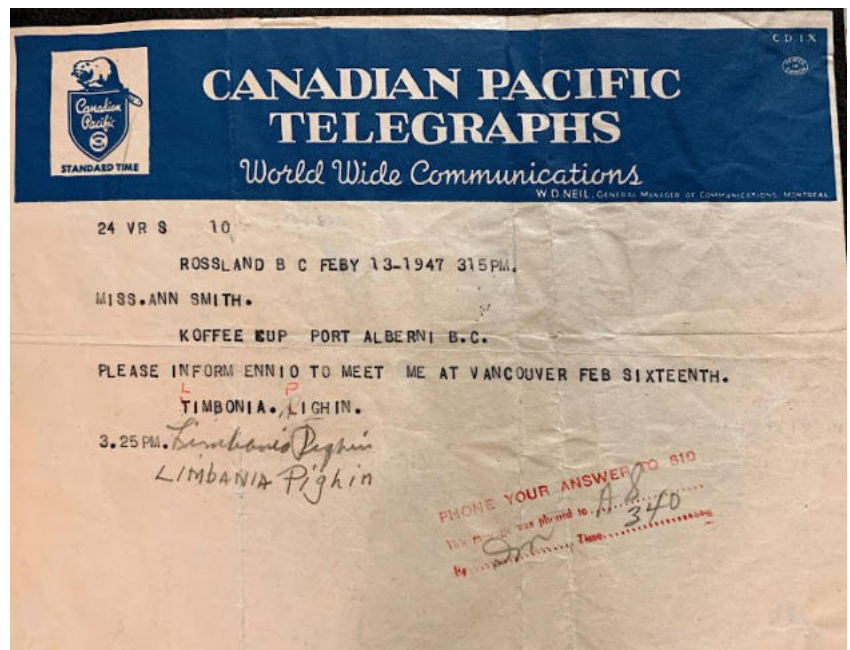


Grandpa and Janet, 2024

him to all his appointments and made sure he had everything he needed. They also created a group text chat early on after the initial stroke to ensure all the siblings received the same updates on Grandpa's condition at the same time. Wayne, Marilyn, and Darlene stopped by to check up on him regularly. Marty visited Grandpa when he was in from working out of town. Another couple who go to church daily picked him up for church for the first five weeks until they went out of town on a vacation. Then Darlene drove him to and from church for four months after that. Everyone chipped in. Grandpa learned firsthand how when you can't drive, you become very dependent on others. Grandpa is now back to living in his house independently, with some assistance from his kids. Janet is especially helpful so during Covid Grandpa lovingly nicknamed her, "The Warden". Grandpa's daughter-in-law, Shaan, said it should now be more like, "Guardian Angel" for all the support she has given him.

Grandpa says, "When I die, don't sell this house for a year. Go through everything. There's so much history here. Maybe some you want to go through and read." Just watch out for those letters written while Grandpa was in Inuvik or you may learn more about Grandma and Grandpa than you bargained for!

Grandpa really enjoys reading handwritten letters and he appreciates anyone who still handwrites. For the cost of a postage stamp, any one of us could make Grandpa's day with a surprise in his mailbox! He keeps tons of memorabilia, including newspaper clippings, letters and cards sent to him. Recently, I was shocked and impressed when he gave me back a couple of postcards I mailed to him over twenty years ago from Japan! He has an entire box filled with memories and cards sent to him when Grandma passed away that he would love to share with you the next time you visit him.



One example of the memorabilia Grandpa has held onto 1947 - "Meet me at Vancouver"

In August of 2025, Janet took Grandpa and Darlene on a trip to Vancouver Island to visit Bert and Garry. Grandpa said they all had quite a bit of fun. When they got to the island, Grandpa drove Bert and Garry from Lake Cowichan to Port Alberni. It took them two hours along a gravel road in Bert's truck. Meanwhile, Darlene spent some time with her sisters-in-law, Shaan and Terrie. After that, Grandpa, Darlene, Bert and Shaan, Garry and Terrie all met up in Parksville while Janet visited her friend in Victoria.

In September 2025, Wayne and Marilyn went with Grandpa to the Nass Valley volcanic ruins in Nisga'a Memorial Lava Bed Provincial Park, about 90 km northwest of Terrace, BC. They took the Nisga'a Highway 113. The eruption happened about 250 years ago, making it the youngest volcanic landscape in Canada. The lava covered two Nisga'a villages, killing about 2000 people. Grandpa drove about half of the way on their 1800 km journey that took them three days to complete. Grandpa says that this valley has very interesting landscapes and should be seen by everyone.



Grandpa and his son, Wayne, on their trip to the lava beds

On this trip, they found a unique tree near the hamlet of Rosswood, 40 km North of Terrace. The tree is aptly named, "The Pissing Tree", because it has a pipe stuck in it that water comes out of,



Marilyn's photo of Grandpa filling up his water bottle at "The Pissing Tree"

24 hours a day. As the story goes, a few decades ago, a homesteader made water collecting easier by running a pipe from a creek. A Cottonwood tree has since grown around the pipe so that you can't see where it enters the tree. Grandpa is happy to say he didn't get sick from drinking the water, and he enjoyed the experience very much. Coincidentally, Grandpa's sister, Argia's oldest daughter, Rosemary's widowed husband, Lloyd Kerr, still lives about a half mile from this tree!

Despite being 97 years old now, Grandpa continues to make plans to travel, visit relatives, and explore new sights. He still has an enthusiasm and curiosity that I think will keep him living his best life for as long as possible. You're never too old to add to your bucket list! We couldn't ask for a better example of how to enjoy life, for his nearly one hundred offspring and their spouses.

Grandma and Grandpa's Philosophy of Life

Of everything in life, Grandma and Grandpa feel the most pride and sense of accomplishment in their family, “from the oldest to the babies.” Whatever came, they accepted. It was the same with grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Whatever they got was great. They absolutely love family gatherings, even when it's just a few children playing in the backyard.

Grandma and Grandpa have a philosophy of life to share with their descendants. Life is all about cooperation, love, and being true to yourself. It doesn't matter who it's with, but you have to cooperate. You need to see the other person's point of view. You don't have to accept other person's point of view, but you need to understand it.

When you do something worthwhile, something that helps someone else, that's what love is about. It's not, “Bye-bye, love you!” Love is when you do something for someone else, to make them feel good. In whatever way, love is when you make others feel important. You should give, but not at the expense of your family. On the other hand, don't spoil your kids. You have to determine whether they need it or just want it.



November 1965—front steps of their home at 121 Quinn Street
Back row: Grandma holding baby Janet, Grandpa holding Marty
Front row: Wayne, Dean, Bert, Bernie, Darlene, Garry



53 years later in 2018—front steps of 121 Quinn Street
Back row: Janet, Grandma, Grandpa, Marty, Dean
Front row: Wayne, Bert, Bernie, Darlene, Garry

Grandpa definitely has hope for the future. He says, everything has a cycle. We might be sliding down now, but it goes up again, and we're moving forward too. In history, there was always big wars, especially since inventing guns. The pendulum swings back and forth but also forward, and some day it might go straight. Maybe it's just his hope, his dream. The Second Coming of Christ would be when it goes straight. That might be the end of the world. 2000 years ago, they lost thousands of men with knives and swords and big wars. There's been 80 years of calm, because all countries calmed down, except Trump, Putin, and Netanyahu. It isn't the regular people who create wars. Do to others what you would have done to yourself. How simple is that? If there's a problem, talk it through.

Grandpa can't get his head around the war in Gaza today. Before weekday Mass he goes for prayers. They read mostly about Jews of long ago. Jesus was born there. He promised a good life. It's two thousand years later, and they're still fighting in Gaza. They broke fences and stole twelve hundred people. Do you destroy two million people and all they had: hospitals and schools, for that?

Grandpa believes we all have the same God. He doesn't like radicals of any religion. He says that the world is changing, and religion needs to change too, but we still need to believe in God and Jesus. Grandpa believes, "It's all the same guy upstairs", whether you're Baptist, Catholic, Protestant, or any other denomination. Christ started it all. It's like a tree. Catholicism came first, like the trunk of the tree. All Christian denominations are like the branches of the tree. Grandpa believes that belief in Christ is more important than any particular denomination.

The most important value Grandpa holds is religion. He believes people are mostly good, and he's met a lot of good people in his life. What makes a person good? It goes back to the Bible. If you see anyone in need, you help them, and there's many ways of helping. You don't have to give them money. Just listening is huge to most people who need help. Although people do need money. You can't do without it.

Grandpa lived through WWII. Luckily, he was too young to be in the army. When Mussolini came into power in Italy, Grandpa's dad sold the house and came to Canada. When Hitler started to rampage through Europe, Italy was the only country who joined him. Grandpa believes there are others in the world today who are just like Hitler and Mussolini, and this worries Grandpa.



Grandpa's photo of a "JESUS SAVES" sign beside a rock slide near Port Alberni approx. 1948

Grandpa says that the best advice he's ever received came from a newspaper clipping of an Ann Landers column. He still has it, photographed below.

When I interviewed him in 2010, Grandpa said: "Never lie to the one in the mirror. That's where problems come in." In 2025, Grandpa brought up the newspaper clipping again, but this time he said: "The guy in the mirror . . . don't bullshit him!" I decided to put these two quotes together so you can come to your own conclusions about how Grandpa has changed over the last 15 years! After

all he's survived, we can forgive him for having lost some of his eloquence of speech, or was it just that he had Grandma by his side to nudge him back in line in 2010? We'll never know!

Every morning when Grandpa shaves, he looks at the man in the mirror. He thinks about yesterday. If he feels he did something wrong, he apologizes or tries to make it right. Incidentally, he lathers with 99% pure Ivory soap. When you wash away your impurities, by reflecting on yesterday, and accepting responsibility for your actions and words, it's like a big weight is lifted off your shoulders.

Grandpa advises, if there's a problem in the family, you have to face the mirror and figure out, how can I change it? The minute you start using excuses, you are not looking at what you can do. It's easier to blame. Grandpa sees people on the street and he thinks, what happened to them? Maybe someone could have said some nice words and corrected them. On the other hand, what we're doing today isn't working - you don't change an addict by giving them more drugs. We need to change the health care system to have more people who can help them change

The Man in the Glass has timeless message

Dear Ann Landers: I was impressed with a poem I read in your column many years ago. The message of being true to one's self is one we need to hear again and again. That poem made a big difference in my life. It was called "The Man in the Glass." Please print it again for those who missed it. This time, I'll cut it out and put it in my wallet. — **E.F. in Topeka, Kan.**

Dear E.F.: The poem that made a big difference in your life was written by a man who died at the age of 24. The poem was sent to me by his sister. Here is the letter:

Dear Ann Landers: My dear brother died a few months ago. He was only 24. After years of struggling with a drug habit, he finally decided he needed treatment, but it was too late. His body was shot.

He wrote this poem when he was drug-free. I hope you will find it suitable to publish in your column. (Please don't use his name.) — **Sister of a Great Guy (Louisiana)**

Dear Sister: The poem is very moving. Your brother was a talented and insightful young man — humble and honest. Here's his poem: The Man in the Glass

*When you get what you want in your struggle for self,
And the world makes you king for a day,
Just go to the mirror and look at yourself,
And see what THAT man has to say.
For it isn't your father or mother or wife
Whose judgment upon you must pass.
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.
Some people might think you're a straight-shootin' chum
And call you a wonderful guy,
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum,
If you can't look him straight in the eye.
He's the fellow to please, never mind all the rest,
For he's with you clear up to the end.
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test
If the guy in the glass is your friend.
You may fool the whole world down the pathway of years,
And get pats on the back as you pass.
But your final reward will be heartaches and tears
If you've cheated the man in the glass.*

their mind. In just 10 years, it's a lot worse at Shepherd's Corner. The patrons used to come inside to talk, but nowadays they are not allowed inside anymore. They are served coffee at the door. Grandpa stopped volunteering at Shepherd's Corner when the patrons started taking it for granted. They started leaving a pigpen on the sidewalk and he noticed each person had a cell phone to text each other to share news about what location had the best free meal coming up. Everyone makes choices. Alcohol and drugs are not the right choices.

I asked, "What does God mean to you?" Grandpa replied, "That's a tough one. He always was and always will be. Always is like a circle with no end to it. I call Him 'Big Guy'. Father laughs like hell when I do that. I believe . . . we call Him he, but it's not a he. It might be an it, or call Him a ghost, or whatever. But, there's a brain out there. Maybe not a brain. Whatever it is, in my opinion, He is the right person. He, or it, or she, is the right thing. Not a person. No one has seen Him, but there's something there that's a hell of a lot better than us humans. It's something we will never know on Earth. I ask Him for a lot of help. No one on earth has the whole answer. I ask for help for everything. I believe in the church. Period. I believe there's somebody better than me. I can't describe God. Whatever it is, I believe it. Scientists are starting to, too. They say, well, we found where Earth came from, or things of that nature. So who created that? If you want to go back to the beginning, use the knowledge we have, but it started somewhere. Tell me where it started. You're not going to get to it; it always was. A thousand years from now, if there are any humans left, they'll be far beyond where we are, and they still won't be able to find the beginning. I believe there's possibly other worlds with humans, why not?"



Grandpa and Grandma still in love on their 60th Anniversary 2010

The biggest change Grandpa has seen in his life is technology. He said, "You can talk anywhere in the world, and even outside the world – on the Space Station! Pretty soon, maybe next year, we might have people living on the moon. In 2035, there may be people on Mars, or any planet, eventually. These are huge things, and the people who did this didn't have to be rich; they were ordinary people." Grandpa thinks humankind should go wherever we can go, and we have the knowledge to do it right.

When I asked them what they believed was the key to a successful marriage, Grandpa said he had never thought of that. There was really no other option. In their minds, there was no such thing as an unsuccessful marriage. They do have some advice about building a happy marriage.



Grandma and Grandpa entertaining family in their carport 1998

Commitment, cooperation, and understanding the other person's point of view are all key. Any problem can be solved, but both people have to believe that. You need to be able to talk things out. Some compromise is necessary depending on how far apart you are. Sometimes one person totally has to give in. It's tough to find that balance, but you have to work at it. We all get angry, and when that happens, the other person has to let the anger work its way through. You may need to be a good listener for a while. It works both ways. It's a mindset. It is important that you both have the same values from the beginning. That's why Grandma and Grandpa say they are fortunate that they met at the CYO. A happy marriage takes a strong commitment and a willingness to do whatever it takes, from both people.

Grandma and Grandpa also believe, "Once you have a child, forget yourself, because that child is number one! If you put the child ahead of the two of you, you will be able to come to an agreement on whatever problems you have."

In marriage, as with the rest of life, when you face the mirror, don't lie to the person you see. Love God, your family, and your neighbour. Do things to make other people happy and to help them. Cooperate and compromise. This way, you will find the road to fulfillment in life.



Grandpa's approach to his 80th birthday cake, June 30, 2008. An example of how he makes other people smile and laugh by finding humour in life.



Great-grandchildren, Callum and Austin, at Grandma and Grandpa's 60th Anniversary, 2010



Grandpa holding his first great-great-grandchild, Lincoln Campbell, 2023