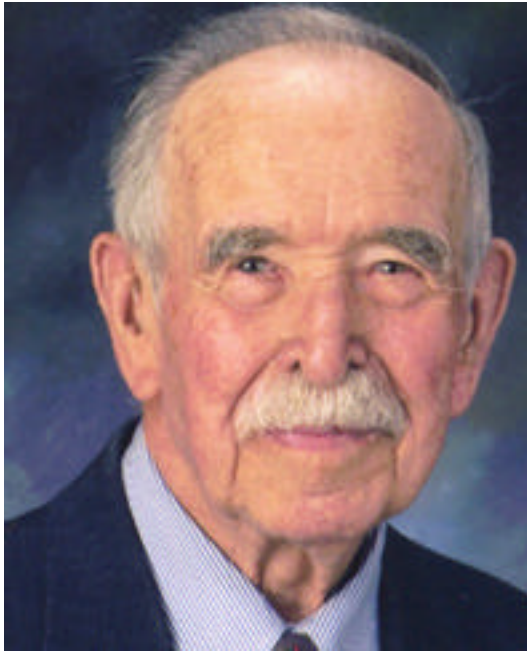


97th Birthday Celebration for Hubbard Area Pioneer



Walter Wawruck, together with his family and friends, celebrated his 97th birthday on January 9th this year. Although he has lived in Regina for more than 40 years, he still considers the Hubbard-Ituna District to be home. It was an occasion to reflect on a lifetime, starting with childhood on a homestead farm, four miles North of Hubbard.

The son of pioneer immigrants Maksym and Maria Wawruch, my father was the sixth child, and the first son, in a family of eight children. The only survivor is his sister, Frances Korchinski, of Saskatoon. Rose Moskal, Sofie Jarvin, Olga Korpus, Eva Samkoe, Caroline Zavediuk, and Nickolas Wawruck are deceased.

My father has a prodigious memory. He recalls the events of 1918, the year when his eldest sister Rose Moskal died, the year when he first attended Stanisloff school a quarter mile north of the homestead farmhouse, and the year when the Church of the Holy Ascension was constructed by his father and neighbors. They included the Filko, Krysowaty, Turchinski, Harasym, and Gendzilewicz families. The school house and the farm house are long gone, but the church building situated between them is still in use. On the farmyard, the large barn built in 1927 and 1928 is starting to collapse, but the roof which my father constructed himself is largely intact.

Classes were held at the rural school only a few months of the year. It was closed for the summer growing and harvest season, and for the coldest days of winter. Walter Wawruck went as far as grade eight, and calculates that he attended Stanisloff no

more than 500 days in total. He worked on the family farm as soon as he was able. As quickly as he was capable of performing a chore, his father Maksym would make him fully responsible for it. My grandfather owned a steam threshing outfit, starting in 1912. At the age of twelve, my father joined the crew, working as the water-man for the boiler and within three years was firing the boiler. He can recite from memory the sequence of farmers for whom they threshed, and time they spent at each, in the fall of 1923. By 1933 my father and his brother Nick were running the threshing outfit on their own.

People were surprised to see “a couple of kids” arrive with a crew. The steam threshing business continued until 1939, when they bought a gasoline tractor.

Walter and Nick Wawruck took greater and greater responsibility for managing the farm as they grew up in an era of hard times through the 1920's and the depression of the 1930's. My father can recount crop successes and failures year by year throughout the period, recalling frosts, grasshoppers, rust, and bumper crops in turn. In the depression, prices were poor and, even if crops were good, there was no money. The depression made a lasting imprint on my father's character and views. It explains his abiding thrift, his abhorrence of waste, and his gratitude for the abundance of modern times. Canada today, he says, is the greatest place to be on earth, and he dismisses anyone who has a complaint.

Walter Wawruck's first venture in public life was in 1938. The municipal councillor for District 1 of Ituna Bon Accord, Alex Harasym, died in an accident. My father was elected to serve the remaining year of the term. At the depth of the depression, much of the municipal council's time was taken up with relief administration. My father says it was not a pleasant experience, dealing with the embarrassments of poverty among neighbours and responding to competing requests for scarce government relief supplies. He also served for a time as the secretary of the Stanisloff School Board.

In 1937, my grandfather moved to Hubbard where he helped his daughters and sons-in-law to manage the hotel and beer parlour, leaving Walter and Nick to manage the farm. My father tells of travelling to Winnipeg in 1937 to negotiate a settlement of the mortgage on the homestead. He got an agreement by the company to accept grain in payment. By 1945, when Walter Wawruck left farming to start a business, they had acquired additional land, and the farms had grown to five quarter sections from one.

Walter Wawruck married my mother Adele Gorchynski in 1940. She was a school teacher from

the Hampton area, north of Yorkton. Her parents were also Ukrainian immigrants. Until 1945, Walter and Adele lived on the Wawruch homestead where my sister Iris and I were born. They then moved to Hubbard, where my father bought a faltering business and started the Hubbard Lumber and Construction company. Immediately after the second war, it was almost impossible to obtain building supplies. In the early days of the business my father had to travel to remote mills in northern Saskatchewan and even as far as British Columbia to find lumber. He learned about lumber and construction as he went.

The post war years soon became an era of economic prosperity and growth. There was great demand for housing in the area, both on farms and in the growing towns, especially in Ituna, which became the hub for shopping, entertainment, religion, and health care. As the business grew, my father entered into partnering arrangements with builders, including the Buchko brothers and Walter Mazden from Ituna. He also fielded his own construction crews. Father met people from a wide area, building houses and selling lumber from Fenwood to Kelliher, and from Lemburg to Jedburg. To this day he recalls names in the hundreds, and runs into people who remember him from his days in the lumber business.

Walter and Adele built a home in Hubbard in 1947, and lived there until they moved to Regina in 1967. My sister Sylvia and my brother Max were born after the move to town. In 1960, Dad's brother Nick died suddenly. Always close, the brothers were inseparable in youth and partners in adulthood. The shock and sadness of that event have stayed with him to this day.

During his years in Hubbard, Walter Wawruch was active in public life. He served on the Hubbard Town Council and the Ituna Hospital Board for a number of years. He was a member of the Ituna Lion's Club. A loyal member of the Liberal Party, he was a constituency worker and an election scrutineer. Jimmy Gardiner was one of his heroes, but so was Conservative John Diefenbaker.

In 1967, the lumber business in Hubbard was wound up, and Walter and Adele moved to Regina, where they built the home that he lives in today. From 1970 to 1975 my father operated a car wash business in partnership with his nephew, Ray Korpus. After that he continued to do carpentry jobs. Also in his retirement, he worked as a volunteer at weekly bingo games at the Ukrainian Orthodox Auditorium, until the fall of 2007. He is frequently recognized around Regina as the man from the car wash or the man from bingo.

Walter and Adele travelled in Canada, the USA, and in Europe, including tours of England, France, Spain, Italy, and the Soviet Union. Twice my father has visited the village in Ukraine where his parent came from. The first time, in 1966, my parents were in the village without permission from the Soviet authorities. A local official seized the film from my father's camera, imposed a fine, and kept them in custody until a bus took them back to the city. Fifteen years later the Soviet era was ending, and my father had the opportunity to view the church in which his parents were married and the house in which his uncle had lived.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church has always been an important part of Walter Wawruch's life. He was instrumental in the construction of Saint Nicholas church in Hubbard in 1953. In Regina he has volunteered in work for the church. He maintains his membership in the Ituna parish, and contributes to the maintenance of the church and cemetery near the Wawruch homestead north of Hubbard.

Adele Wawruch died in November 2002. Walter Wawruch lives on his own, with frequent visits and support from his children, family, and friends. He enjoys hearing from friends, especially those from the Hubbard and Ituna area.

W. A. Wawruch, February 21, 2008