

MADGE STAJOHVIC CHALOVICH

It is said that all people can be the cause of joy--some by their coming, others by their going. Madge Stojohovic Chalovich spent eight decades finding the joy in the simple things in life.

Food was one of those things. She enjoyed Kielbassi, stuffed cabbage, hot dogs, pizza, ice cream and all the goodies. For a number of years, she worked at Manos Bakery near her Quebec Street home, then at General Nutrition as a stock girl. These jobs not only provided some extras for the family, but more and more food. Madge was an excellent cook and baker. When big Joe was off work during a long Allis Chalmers strike, Madge learned quickly how to turn government surplus meat and other mystery food into excellent cuisine.

Everything was homemade...corn bread, white bread, and mystery meat chili. Their home always smelled like fresh bread. Personally, I can tell you that Madge's ladyfingers brought great joy to my dad, and probably took five years off his life. I must admit, however, that I still haven't figured out what Croatian folks find special about pigs' knuckles.

In recent years, Madge liked to eat things that she was not supposed to eat. She could cheat as long as she ate healthy a few days before. She was good at pacing herself...she knew when an event was coming to prepare in advance. She also loved soups...unfortunately salty soup was not what the doctor ordered given her heart condition, but she ate it and kept going.

Madge also enjoyed music. When healthy, she had a radio or tape player in every room. As she cleaned she was able to listen as she went from one room to another. As she lay dying, she made a point to comment on the music. "Isn't that beautiful," she told Joe. "Croatian music is some of the best music."

Madge had a green thumb and enjoyed nature. In Pittsburgh and later in Greenville she tended to her flowers, watched her birds and painted birdhouses. She and Patty also spent a good deal of time painting winter scenes and animals, and watching painting shows. Madge sold cards made from her paintings to raise money for St. Gabriel Church and enjoyed painting miniature figures for glass "snow balls" and getting painting books as gifts. We enjoyed teasing her in the voice of instructor Bob Ross: "*Now we'll take our brush and start to prepare our canvas.*" She got a kick out of that.

Christmas was another joy. She loved to give and to get gifts...loved to guess what was in the box. She also loved to guess who the killer was in a mystery movie...and was often right in both instances. In recent years, her hearing declined and she was less capable of participating in craziness. But this past Christmas, her spirit returned when she visited Pittsburgh. Seeing her daughter brightened her up, as did having dinner with the Millers, Biancos, and Sciclunas.



When Madge wasn't enjoying bingo, yahtzee, singing Croatian songs, taking day trips with Patty or a St. Gabriel social club, she had her memories of our cruise, bowling, and playing cards with her friends and trips with the OVER 50 CLUB. Speaking of the OVER 50 CLUB, my mom would call every meeting night to update Madge on what was happening with the members. Madge loved visiting Pittsburgh and getting back to St. Boniface where she could see those friends and attend Mass. All of these things, coupled with the excitement of picking Joe up after a business trip could elicit a smile from Madge that looked too big for her face.

Toward the end she was seeing doctors 4 times a week. She had gone through so much during the nineties with chemotherapy that she refused insulin, refused dialysis and refused several other treatment options.

Even with severe problems she continued to go on her weekly routine with Patty: exercise class on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, Lunch out and shopping on Tuesdays, the occasional (monthly) SCIENCE FICTION NIGHT on Fridays with snacks that she so enjoyed and a good old time sci fi movie. Mom was generally quiet at these movie nights as she was pretty tired by the evening. But after everyone had made their snacks she got out of her chair, picked up a few morsels and made herself comfortable in front of the screen. She was a good critic...that movie stinks! That is the worst movie that I ever saw! But there were good ones also. She always seemed to enjoy the company; that is what we all enjoyed most.

Her family and friends contributed to her being a happy person in sickness and in health. On Monday, she thanked Joe and Pat for the care they had provided to her and said that she was at peace since Gary and Donna were able to visit her over the weekend. Then they prayed the Lord's Prayer together. Madge was ready to take her final trip.

From 807 Ahlers Way to 513 Quebec Street, to 1433 Dickson Street and finally to Greenville NC, Madge was quick to welcome family and to make new friends.

From St. Nicholas, to St. Boniface to St. Gabriel her constant commitment to her Faith was the essence of who she was. For that reason, neither cancer nor the death of her husband could diminish her optimism for life. Joe told me that when his dad died, Madge said you have to let go. It's easy to be sad but you can't let that happen.

I encourage all of us to take Madge's advice. Despite being physically gone, Madge will always be a part of each of us despite the pain we may be feeling now. Remember without the pain of Good Friday, there could be Easter Joy.

Some people bring joy by coming, others by going. Today we celebrate Madge's coming and going...coming into this world so that she could impact our lives; and going to that final destination to be with our heavenly father.