

## Digging Into Family History

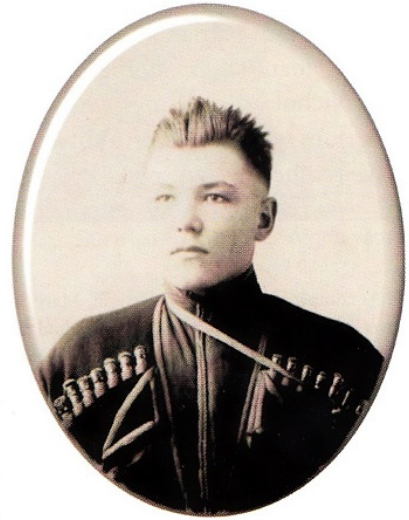
Joan Parker (1934-) has a mission to unravel her Kazakoff and Samoyloff family roots. Born in the Kamsack district of Saskatchewan, Joan moved five years later with her parents George Mikhaelovich and Annabelle to the Toronto area of Ontario where George became a successful builder. Earlier her Dad barely survived the train explosion that took the life of Peter V. Verigin in the fall of 1924. Her great grandfather is rumoured to have been a member of the Russian royalty. Members of the group have married to Molokans in California as well as Doukhobors in western Canada. Joan has relatives scattered across Russia. Russian ethnographer Svetlana A. Inikova has been engaged to unravel this interesting and complicated family history.

The photographs in Joan's collection reveal the faces of pioneers with hard work, determination, a sense of humour, longevity, and surprises. After sending me these rare images, Joan Parker wrote a brief first-person account of her interesting family:

'...My father was on the train with Peter V. Verigin when Mr Verigin was killed. Dad told me that he was 20 years old and didn't like farm work. So he was going to British Columbia to be a lumberjack. He said that Peter's girlfriend [Mary Strelioff<sup>1</sup>] got up from her seat and went to the back of the train to talk to someone, so Dad went and sat across from Peter Verigin. They talked for a while, and then the woman came back to her seat so Dad got up and went to his seat a few seats back. He said he didn't remember anything about the explosion, but when he regained consciousness, he was lying on the side of the tracks [near Farron, BC] in excruciating pain. They got him to the hospital...and they told my grandfather Kazakoff that Dad would die. His injuries were too severe. Part of his hip was blown away and infection had set into his leg. The doctors wanted to amputate his leg, but my grandfather told them "No". Dad was in the hospital for about one year. Then grandfather heard of a good doctor in Winnipeg and took Dad there. While there, he got better, but the doctors told Dad that he would never walk. But being determined, a stubborn man, he proved them wrong. His back gave him a lot of pain over the years, but he walked normally.

'During the depression, Dad left Kamsack to look for work in Ontario. My Mother and I stayed on the farm with my Kazakoff grandparents. Dad became a carpenter in Sudbury and sent for my Mother and me. We lived there for about two years, then moved to Toronto where there were more opportunities for work. He worked as a carpenter and then got a job with Gordon Shipp, a house builder. Mr Shipp branched out to building houses on large parcels of land. Dad went on his own and built one home at a time and with the profit brought more land and built more homes. He became a very successful builder in the Kingsway area of Toronto. In 1955, he had a massive heart attack and again, was not expected to live. He pulled through but quit the building trade, as it was too stressful. He helped his relatives from out west become builders in Toronto. "Showed them the ropes."

'When my Mother died suddenly, Dad got cancer and lived for eight years, then passed away peacefully in 1980. Tom Houlieff had organized a tour to Russia in 1978 and that is when Dad went to the village of Orlovka in Georgia and found out about his great grandfather, not telling anyone his name. When he returned, he tried to pursue the family tree, but he had gotten too sick. I, at that time, wasn't really interested in the history. After



George Michael Kazakoff in his teens. In October 1924 he survived the train explosion which took the life of Peter V. Verigin and eight others.

he died, I started to get interested. I am sorry I never listened that closely to what he was saying about our relatives in Russia. I hope that I am not too late for my kids and grandchildren to find their roots.<sup>2</sup>

Joan's father George was told that his great, great Grandfather Fred Kazakoff concealed his true identity. He told the people of the village 'since I was in the Tsar's army, I shall call myself Fyodor Kazakov.' He told them that he was so well known in Russia that no one would think of looking for him amongst the Doukhobors as they were exiled to the Caucasus Mountains in the hopes that the Tatars would kill them. Although this was never proven,<sup>3</sup> the rumour is partly corroborated by Eli A. Popoff:

'Oral tradition among Doukhobor elders has it that Alexander the First did not really die from the assassination attempt in Taganrog in 1825, but that he chose that time to hide away from his family and all state duties. This tradition has it that the duties of the Emperor which were sort of laid out for him, came to be so obnoxious to Alexander that he could not stand them any longer. It was generally accepted that he had stayed a while secretly and incognito among the Doukhobors, but that he eventually went into voluntary exile to Siberia as a dissident religious patriarch under the name of Fyodor Koozmitch' (Popoff, 1992: 45).

Joan tells of another interesting family connection, that of her grandmother Dunia Barabanoff. Her father was Nicholas Barabanoff who was called 'Big Boots' because they couldn't find shoes big enough to fit him and therefore he was forced to make his own. He lived near Stony Creek area near Pelly, Saskatchewan and is said to have reached the age of 115.

The family tree search continues....



Left, George M. Kazakoff and an un-named musical partner. Photo taken around 1924.

1. As companion to Peter V. Verigin, Mary Streliaff was also killed in the explosion. 'It has been suggested that a rival handmaiden, or possibly even a lover of one of the girls he gathered around him, planned the murder because of jealousy' (Woodcock and Avakumovic, 1968: 257).

2. Letter 22nd February 2001. See also telephone conversation (Koozma J. Tarasoff's Notes, 4th February 2001: 6419-6420).

3. Joan tells me that she has been looking for DNA testing to confirm or deny the rumour.