



REMEMBERING **Sonja Freno**

October 9, 1930 - September 26, 2020



The Freno family regrettably announces the passing of the matriarch, dear mother, grandmother and great grandmother Sonja Elizabeth Freno (Nonee as she was affectionately known by family). Sonja passed on September 26, surrounded by loved ones at her family home of 64 years. The family were quietly preparing for her upcoming 90th birthday.

Sonja was born to Hans and Hedvig Jansrud of Norway on October 9, 1930 in New Denver BC, and lived her early days in Sandon, BC where her father was employed as a miner. He passed when Sonja was only 13 years of age. After his death the family moved to New Denver, then to Nelson. She met the love of her life, husband Louis William (Bill) Freno and they married November 2, 1951. Bill and Sonja spent a short while in Victoria, where their eldest daughter was born, then returned to Nelson to grow and nurture their family in the community they loved.

Sonja was a woman ahead of her time in business and career. Sonja started her working life at the Bank of Montreal and subsequently became a businesswoman and property owner with husband Bill. Sonja operated her business in Nelson, Trail and Cranbrook, Sonja's China Cabinet and was renown for her savvy business sense. She was supported in her endeavors by her husband, children, and longtime friends and employees Mrs. Mary Finnie and Mrs. Yvonne Hickey as well as many other local women. Sonja was a bit of a risk taker, invested wisely and once bought a property sight unseen, on the advice of a developer. The family continues to hold that particular property to this day.

She was very involved in civic and provincial politics, supporting Bill during his political aspirations. She remained involved in community boards (City of Nelson Police Board, Library Board) and was a long-standing member of the Catholic Women's League, Nelson Italian Canadian Society, Downtown Business Owners

Association and Chamber of Commerce.

Sonja canned, baked and made splendid family meals. She was especially skilled at sweet and sour pork, chicken chow mein, roast turkey meals, glazed ham and of course pasta sauce. Nonee would always enjoy her meal with one glass of red wine, right up to within a few days of her passing. Nonee loved to sew for her children and grandchildren. According to Bill, a successful trip to Fabricland would only cost a few hundred dollars, and with bags and reams of fabric in hand, and sufficient room in the Chevy van for much more.... Nonee was able to accumulate all the tools and skills necessary to become a fantastic seamstress.

Camping was a mainstay of the entire family, Sonja was often left to parent the kids on her own in New Denver and Sullivan Lake, Washington while Bill continued to work, waiting for his annual holidays. Sonja and Bill were such a mainstay at Sullivan Lake the US Forest Service made them permanent camp hosts for many years. This was extremely convenient for her children to take advantage of 'free babysitting' for the grandchildren. There were many, many summers spent at Sullivan Lake and no end of adventures, beautiful camp cookouts, card playing and board games with Nonee and Poppa.

Bill and Sonja also escaped the BC winters by driving down to Yuma, Arizona and travelled to Hawaii, Mexico, New Zealand, Australia, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada and California

Nonee also spent endless hours in her garden, particularly the rock garden at the family home, in the springtime and throughout the summer. Many people complimented the variety of beautiful flowers and stunning colors. The children would often garden as a chore, but this turned into a lifetime of gardening pleasures for them.

Sonja continued her sponsorship of two African children through the Canadian charity, Chalice Canada.

Sonja is survived by four of her six children, Penny, Lorri, Bernadette and Chris. She is also survived by 17 grandchildren and 12 great grandchildren whom she loved dearly. She was predeceased by her husband Bill, eldest son Bill Jr and youngest daughter Catherine, her Mom and Dad and sister, Esther.

Fortunately Sonja was able to fulfill her wish to stay in her family home due to the dedication and love and care of her daughters Lorri and Bernadette. Nonee lived to enjoy her home and many family gatherings up until the end. Sonja was able to fulfill her wishes that she be cared for and spend her final years in the embrace of her family home.

A very special thank you to Dr. Paul Walker, Dr McKay, all staff, nurses home support workers, and caregivers of Interior Health, special friends, neighbours, Debbie her hairdresser and Amy her foot care nurse.

A private family service (due to Covid) will be held at The Cathedral of Mary Immaculate on Saturday October 17. Interment at the Nelson Mausoleum will follow where she'll join the love of her life, most beloved husband Bill. Together again.

In lieu of flowers please donate generously to the Heart and Stroke Foundation
<https://hsf.donorportal.ca/Donation/Donation.aspx?F=1773&T=GENER&L=en-CA&G=328&NFP=1> or Chalice Canada <https://www.chalice.ca/donate>

