

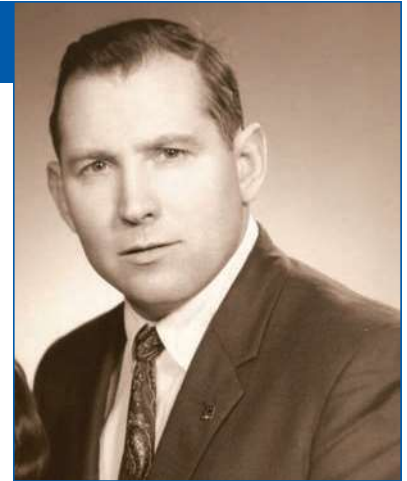
Gregor Kowalik

Gregor Kowalik was born on August 25, 1926 in Kherson Oblast, Ukraine. His father Ivan was a kulak and his mother Tatiana was a homemaker. During the Soviet collectivization years of 1929-1933, his father was forcibly taken away by the Communists, murdered and his land seized, forcing Gregor and his mother to work on other collective farms.

Gregor is a Holodomor survivor and has been interviewed several times by various media outlets, appearing on such shows as *The Fifth Estate*. This horrendous experience had a huge impact on his life and motivated him to become successful, be an active member in both the Ukrainian and Canadian communities, live life to the fullest, appreciate its many blessings, and to never waste food.

During World War II, at the age of 16, Gregor was forced from Ukraine to work as a civilian slave labourer at the Daimler-Benz factory. He worked as a toolmaker producing parts for German arms. Conditions there were appalling and inhumane, and casualty rates were the highest at this factory. After the Americans destroyed the Daimler-Benz factory, Gregor found himself in such German cities as Stuttgart, Frankfurt am Main and Korbach, where he met his future wife, Maria Worobec. While in Germany, waiting to immigrate to Canada, he took courses to become a locksmith and a bricklayer, skills which came in handy when, 25 years later, he designed and built his beloved cottage on “Vitayemo Road” in the Eastern Townships of Quebec. In March 1950, Gregor travelled by ship from Germany to Montreal, Quebec, joining Maria who had preceded him there by three months. They married in May 1950 at St. Sophia’s Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral.

An accomplished jack-of-all trades, Gregor worked in various occupations until he found permanent employment at the Robin Hood Company. Active in the company’s administration team, he was elected as the union president for 6 consecutive years. He was greatly respected by both the company and its union members for his highly developed negotiation and diplomatic skills. Fluent in many languages, he was able to effectively communicate with all the workers and had many success stories in preventing terminations or reinstating terminated employees. Gregor continued to work there until his retirement in 1991.





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He was also the Treasurer at St. Sophia's Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral for 12 years, expertly managing the Cathedral's finances.

Gregor and Maria had two children: their son George (Yuriy) born in 1951, and daughter Helen (Halya) in 1955. Their son passed away suddenly in 2012. Gregor and Maria lived in Montreal until 2011, when they moved to Aurora, Ontario to live with their daughter and son-in-law, prior to moving to the Ivan Franko Home in 2014. His beloved Maria passed away at 93, in 2017, after 67 years of marriage.

Mr. Kowalik's most rewarding accomplishments are his children and grandchildren. Gardening is a passion and, at the age of almost 92, he still enjoys growing vegetables and fruits and preserving and sharing them. He is an accomplished chef, an avid reader, a multi-linguist, a self-taught tailor and mandolin player, a crossword puzzle enthusiast, a political enthusiast, a humourist and storyteller, loves all things Ukrainian, and dearly enjoys a good debate and a good joke.

Throughout life's many adversities and tragedies, Gregor's deep and abiding faith in God and God's plan for him has sustained him, and he remains an optimist and grateful for the life he lives.

At Ivan Franko Home, he leads an active life, participates and assists in many activities, which includes serving as the President of the Home's Residents' Council.

