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Please Note - - -

Your subscription renewal date is printed on the mailing label.

The Schürch Family Association of North America publishes a newsletter twice a year, in April and November. Back issues are available for \$10 US and \$10 CAD. Bound volumes are available upon request and availability. Digital copies of all newsletter issues are also available.

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<u>Term</u>	<u>U.S. and CANADA</u>
Two year Digital Subscription	\$24
Two year Hardcopy Subscription	\$30
Two year Digital & Hardcopy Subscription	\$50

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President's Message April 2026

Dear Cousins,

While reading the research notes from our Historical Chair Vanessa Warner, it reminded me that our Association never ceases to help others find their family roots. Every time we find an answer to a query it sets the mind in motion thinking of the big puzzle waiting for all of the pieces to be connected. All of us want to know where our ancestors came from and why they settled in North America.

Our upcoming Reunion in July takes us back to the Markham area, a place where we held our reunion in 1996. Things have changed greatly in the area as the old homesteads have been bought up to make room for the ever-increasing villages, towns and cities in and around Markham and Stouffville. However, there are still a few places of historical interest for those who are looking for information about their ancestors who may have settled in these areas.

A Mennonite Historical Society paper on Markham explicitly notes that in 1804 “a large group of settlers arrived in York County... There were three Hoover brothers. Casper Sherk was a brother to Joseph Schoerg, who settled on the Grand River in 1800. These all came to the Markham area in 1804.”

This ties Casper directly into the already-known line of Joseph Schoerg/Sherk, the Grand River/Blair pioneer, and places his arrival in Markham in the same 1804 wave as the Reesor, Stouffer, Hoover, Nighswander and related families.

A descendant summary (Ontario Genealogy discussion) echoes this, stating that Casper Schürch (Shirk, Sherk, etc.) moved to the Gormley Corners area (just north of Markham Village) in 1804, consistent with the Markham-area Mennonite settlement pattern.

The Markham Mennonite history paper explains that the Pennsylvania Mennonites coming to York County (Home District) were motivated by the same factors as those going to the Grand River: desire for good farmland, religious liberty, and secure land titles under the new British regime.

It notes that some had scouted north of York (Toronto) even before 1803, but that by 1804 a large, related kin-group migration brought families like Christian Reesor, Abraham Stouffer, the Hoover brothers, and Casper Sherk into Markham Township.

Broader Markham histories confirm that this period saw “Pennsylvania Deutsch” settlers arriving shortly after 1800 on the Rouge River, with farming communities forming along surveyed concessions; Mennonite families such as Reesor and Wideman became the backbone of this German-speaking farm belt.

Our reunion coordinators, Betty Sherk and Rick Evans, have been working diligently these past two years researching locations, developing relationships with local historians and families, and making final arrangements for this reunion with a focal point in the town of Stouffville. Volunteers will be needed to make this a very memorable visit for our cousins from North America and our cousins from Switzerland.

As a final note, we need help to keep our Association engine running. As needs of the individuals on the Executive and Committees change due to age, health, etc., we will need help from those who are interested in assuming any of the responsibilities on the Executive and Committees. As my term as President ends at the 2026 Reunion so will a new President take my place. If you are interested in volunteering your time I would encourage you to contact me so that I can present your offers of commitment to our Association at our next Executive meeting.

Until we meet again in July, my wife Kathy and I wish all of you the very best.

Stephen D. Shirk

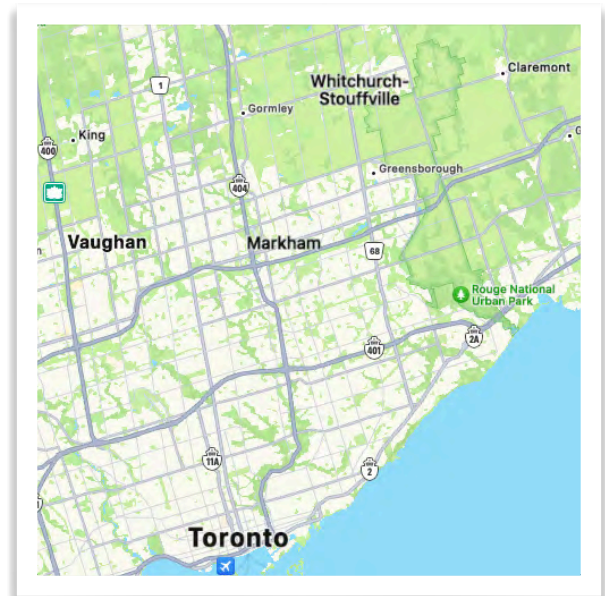


SCHÜRCH FAMILY ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA REUNION 2026

THE STOUFFVILLE LEGION
150 MOSTAR ST., STOUFFVILLE, ON
JULY 24 & 25, 2026

As our present and our future are entwined with our past we look forward to exploring our roots at the July reunion.

The Markham Whitchurch-Stouffville area is where Casper Sherick/Shirk, H44, an older brother of Joseph H46, settled in 1804, along with 13 other families and individuals from Pennsylvania. This is their story.



A Schürch reunion was held in Markham in 1996. The town has grown significantly since then. Whitchurch-Stouffville is a small town north of Markham up Highway 48 and is surrounded by farms.

The local legion is the site of the 2026 reunion. The Stouffville Legion supports veterans in many ways. For one, they provide a space for veterans to gather and socialize. They also offer their building for public use. Rick Evans, the reunion co-chair, has used this facility a number of times for local hockey events. We have hired the Legion's Women's Auxiliary to provide lunches and snacks for our reunion.

REGISTRATION

The registration form is included in this newsletter. Additional copies of the registration form can be downloaded from the web site. <https://www.schurchfamilyassociation.net/>.

Everything, including meals, is on site except for the bus tour.

Registration fee includes the following during the reunion: snacks and beverages throughout, lunch (Friday & Saturday), concert, pizza supper, and bus tour. The **Gourmet Barbecue Banquet** is a separate fee..

During our time together we are only able to accommodate vegetarians and those with a gluten intolerance.

TIME	FRIDAY, JULY 24, 2026
8:00 - 9:30	Registration - Muffins and coffee/tea available
9:45 - 10:00	Welcome and Facility Information by descendant Rick Evans H44112664
10:00 - 10:50	From Pennsylvania to Ontario - Casper Schuerch Code H44 by descendant Stephen Shirk H44112562
10:50 - 11:10	BREAK
11:10 - 12:00	Area History by Fred Robbins
12:00 - 12:50	Heise Hill Cemetery (the burial site of Casper and descendants) by Larry Hogg
12:50 - 1:50	LUNCH - Prepared by the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Legion
1:50 - 2:40	Local Anabaptist History - Armchair chat with Ruth Burkholder
2:40 - 3:30	From Ontario to Saskatchewan - Sherick Roots - Isobel Fishley H4425211 and Ann Barnsley H4425212
3:30 - 3:45	BREAK
3:45 - 4:45	Heritage Tour Recap by Ken Sherk
4:45 - 5:55	Inter-Active Group Games
5:55 - 7:00	SUPPER - PIZZA NIGHT
7:00 - 7:45	Concert with Anne Walker - Ontario born singer/songwriter/historian/teacher
7:45 - 8:30	Board games with crokinole competition
TIME	SATURDAY, JULY 25, 2026
8:30 - 9:30	Registration - Muffins and coffee/tea available
9:30 - 9:50	From Grist Mill to Cider Mill by Catherine Hooker
9:50 - 10:15	What are Schürchs doing?
10:15 - 10:30	Bus tour information
10:45 - 4:15	Bus tour with lunch
4:15 - 4:45	Group Photos by Code
4:45 - 5:30	Live auction - pay for purchases at the end
5:30 - 6:00	Set up for banquet
6:00 - 7:45	Banquet by Gourmet Barbecue
7:45 - 8:30	Business Meeting and Closing Remarks

OUR SPEAKERS

Stephen Shirk: Stephen is our president, an avid historian, who did a great deal of legwork to find his own roots, and a descendant of Code H44.

Fred Robbins: Fred is a local historian who knows a great deal about the history of this area.

Larry Hogg: Larry is a retired CA, has anabaptist roots and oversees the Heise Hill Cemetery where Casper, H44, and several family members are buried.

Ruth Burkholder: Ruth married into an anabaptist family coming from an English home. She became very involved in this area and has a wealth of knowledge. She and Fred Robbins established the Stouffville Historical Society and ran it for twenty years until interest faded.

Isobel Fishley and Ann Barnsley: Isobel and Ann are sisters whose grandfather moved from Ontario to Saskatchewan to farm in 1904. They are descendants of H44.

Ken Sherk: Ken, Code N13D462 and his wife Erli experienced their first Heritage Tour and are pleased to show some highlights.

Catherine Hooker: Catherine grew up on a farm just east of this area. Her family had a mill that was changed to a cider mill. It is a fascinating story of grit and determination.

GOOD TO KNOW REUNION TIDBITS

- Historians will be available in the Legion's Board Room to assist with root research. Bonus: The Legion has great wifi.
- Coffee, tea, water and muffins will be available throughout out the reunion.
- Books and memorabilia will be on sale.
- At every reunion we hold a live auction. The funds raised go towards family research in North America and Europe. Please hand in your auction items at the registration desk upon arrival. Auction items will be displayed until Saturday at 4pm.
- Your old family photos are welcomed. We will scan them and add them to our photo gallery.
- For the purpose of identification in group photos, we will take photos of you with your name tag. We'll have a waiver form at the registration desk.
- Should you have any questions about your registration contact Zulema Evans at routestoroots2026@gmail.com.



If you have any questions about the reunion please contact Betty Sherk at esherk18@gmail.com or telephone 647-225-0650.

The Board is currently looking for volunteers to host the 2028 Family Reunion in the U.S. Two locations were recommended at the last Reunion in 2024 and during our Heritage Tour in 2025, Ohio and Minnesota. Other locations may be suggested as well. Proposals will be considered by the Board at our next Executive Meeting in May and some preliminary announcements will be given at the General Meeting at our Reunion 2026 in Stouffville.

BIENNIAL REUNION HISTORY

Reunions have been held every two years, with one exception, since 1982.

1982 Fredericksburg, PA USA	1984 Sherkston, ON Canada	1986 Lititz, PA USA	1988 St. Jacobs, ON Canada
1990 Ephrata, PA USA	1992 Stevensville, ON Canada	1994 Goshen, IN USA	1996 Markham, ON Canada
1998 Lancaster, PA USA	2000 Kitchener, ON Canada	2002 Lancaster, PA USA	2004 Ridgeway, ON Canada
2006 Churchtown, PA USA	2008 Selkirk, ON Canada	2010 Harrisonburg, PA USA	2012 Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON, Canada
2014 Millersville, PA USA	2106 Waterloo, ON Canada	2018 Lewisburg, PA USA	2020/2022 Crystal Beach, ON Canada
2024 Millersville, PA USA	2026 Stouffville, ON Canada	2028 TBA USA	2030 TBA Canada

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR THE REUNION



1. **Consider the Lilies B & B** 16571 Ninth Line, Stouffville, 416-456-7167. <https://considertheliliesbnb.ca/page-2/> e-mail: considertheliliesbnb@gmail.com \$175 to \$250 per night with a full breakfast. Five rooms. About 20 minute drive to the reunion site
2. **Days Inn by Wyndham Stouffville** - 35 minutes from Toronto Pearson Airport - 38 Ringwood Dr., Stouffville. 905-642-2929. stouffvilledaysinn@gmail.com. - **five minutes** from the reunion site - free continental breakfast, parking and wi-fi. Starting at \$189. Ten rooms with two queens are reserved at the group rate of \$189 until **June 20, 2026**. Hotel Website: <https://www.wyndhamhotels.com/days-inn/stouffville-ontario/days-inn-stouffville/overview?checkInDate=07/23/2026&checkOutDate=07/26/2026&groupCode=072326SCH>
3. **Courtyard by Marriott Toronto Northeast/Markham** - 7095 Woodbine Avenue, Markham, ON, L3R 1A3 - On-site Bistro Restaurant - rooms and suites - parking for a fee - 30 minutes from the reunion site- from \$220 CAD per night - Website: <https://marriott.com>
4. **Monte Carlo Inn - Toronto Markham** - 8900 Woodbine Avenue, Markham, ON, L3R 5K6 - 30 minutes from the reunion site from \$195 CAD per night - Visit <https://www.montecarloinns.com/downtown-markham-suites>
5. **Hampton Inn and Suites By Hilton Toronto Markham**. - 52 Bodrington Court, Markham, ON, L6G 0A9. - free hot breakfast and wi-fi - from \$342 CAD per room - 30 minutes from the reunion site - Website: hilton.com
6. **Campgrounds:**
 - I. **Cedar Beach Park on Musselman's Lake**, 15014 Ninth Line, Stouffville, Ontario - twenty minutes from the reunion site - 1-866-588-8828 -Email: info@cedarbeach.ca. Web Site: <https://www.cedarbeach.ca/>
 - II. Grangeways RV Park & N Family Campground - 9700 Concession 3 Rd. Sandford ON L0C 1E0 grangeways.com - 25 minutes from Stouffville
 - III. **Ponderosa Campground and Trailer Park** - 19332 Hwy 48, Mount Albert, ON L0G 1M0 - 25 minutes from the reunion site - Call: 905-473-260 - 21 km from Stouffville

Explore the Area

- <https://discoverstouffville.ca/>
- <https://www.townofws.ca/play/parks-and-open-spaces/>
- Bruce's Mill Conservation Area: Treetop Trekking + Disc Golf + Geocaching + Hiking + Zip lining + Mountain biking with Sheltered Picnic Areas - This is located on Casper Sherick's original lot.
- Markham Village Heritage Tour - <https://www.markham.ca/about-city-markham/markham-heritage/tours/markham-village-heritage-tour>

FFurther Affield.....

45 Minutes South of Stouffville...

FFrequently Visited Sites in...



Top Attractions & Sightseeing

- CN Tower: Offering panoramic city views and the daring EdgeWalk.
- Royal Ontario Museum (ROM): A top museum for art, culture, and nature.
- Ripley's Aquarium of Canada: A major attraction located downtown near the CN Tower.
- Casa Loma: A majestic castle offering a look into the city's history.
- Toronto Islands: Just a short ferry ride from downtown for beaches and skyline views.
- Hockey Hall of Fame: A must-visit for sports fans.
- Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO): Features an extensive collection of art.
- Little Canada: An immersive, miniature attraction.
- City Cruises Toronto: Dinner cruises for viewing the skyline.

Solomon Shirk:

Boy Soldier of the Civil War

By Linda Shirk

H40317333m



A C-Span show from 2024 was “Minors Who Fought in the Civil War”. The presenters were historians who had written the book, “Of Age - Boy Soldiers and Military Power in the Civil War Era”. Because their talk was in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, they chose three local examples (not in the book) of teenage boys who lied about their ages to enlist in the Union army. One of the three was Pvt. Solomon Shirk (H4716) from Franklin County, Pennsylvania, just west of Gettysburg. His parents were Christian (H471) and Annie (Rife) Shirk. Solomon was a member of Co. D of the 107th Pennsylvania Infantry. At his enlistment in November, 1861, he had overstated his age by three years, claiming to be 18. Ten months later, he was wounded at the Battle of Antietam (Sharpsburg), Maryland and back at duty after three months. Six months after returning to duty, he was wounded in the abdomen on July 1, the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg. He died at an Army hospital three days later and is buried in the National Cemetery there. His age in the 1860

Census is listed as 14, meaning he was likely 15 when he enlisted. He would have been a “large boy” and may have been able to pass as 18, but puberty came later than for today’s teen boys.

How large was the percentage of underage teen boys enlisting when the minimum age was 21 and 18 with parental consent? Because Union records were better, the authors chose one New York regiment to study. They looked at all records available for its soldiers before and after the war. If the numbers weren’t consistent with the age given at enlistment, the conclusion was that the soldier had lied. For that regiment, it was 9.5%. For a smaller group, a company from Minnesota, it was 13.5%. A mathematician doing similar work found 11.1% of white Union soldiers and 8.4% of Black Union soldiers misstating their ages. Official military records confirm this. A graph showing the ages of enlistments shows a huge spike like the shape of the Chrysler Building for 18-year-olds and a smaller, but still noticeable, peak for 21-year-olds.

The U.S. Census before the Civil War listed an occupation for males 15 and older so it was expected that they could be working for pay. Even if teens had worked previously, the young teen soldiers weren’t good soldiers. The Army found that they weren’t able to make the really long marches required of a soldier. As for the families they left behind, their concern wasn’t for the young ages of their sons. The concept of adolescence didn’t come until the end of the century. It was that a financial asset had left; families felt they were entitled to the wages the boy could have earned.

Solomon had an older brother, David G. Shirk (H4715) who was in the same regiment. Similarly, he stated his age as 18 when he enlisted a few weeks after Solomon in January, 1862. It was likely true, as he was 17 in the 1860 Census. He, too, was wounded at Gettysburg but survived. Later, he was captured and a POW in both Salisbury, NC and Libby Prison, VA. He was in very serious medical condition when liberated. He lived until 1914, long enough to participate in the three-day, 50th Anniversary Gettysburg reunion of Union and Confederate soldiers in 1913.

And there was another brother, Jacob G. Shirk (H4714), born in 1840. He was 23 when he

Boy Soldiers and Military Power in the Civil War Era - Discussion

<https://www.c-span.org/program/the-civil-war/of-age-boy-soldiers-and-military-power-in-the-civil-war-era/649776>



Children of Civil War Vets Remember their Fathers

enlisted in 1863, just after the Battle of Gettysburg. He had a wife then but no children yet. He was shot in the right leg during the Battle of Petersburg in 1865. His leg was amputated which left him crippled for life. He was still able to farm near Abilene, Kansas, where he moved in 1882, and died in 1930.

Note: There are some inconsistencies among the military records, obituaries, and gravestone photos for these Shirks.

Information taken from C-Span, "Of Age - Boy Soldiers and Military Power in the Civil War Era" by Frances M. Clarke and Rebecca Jo Plant, [Ancestry.com](https://www.ancestry.com) and [FindAGrave.com](https://www.findagrave.com).



My Heritage Deevide AI

This program animates old photos into video.

[Click to view an example of a finished video:](#)

The Tragic Story of Civil War Child Soldiers
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1NIXK0PAmPk>

Schurch Shindigs

Kurt and Judy Schurch left their home in Switzerland at the end of March for a vacation in Vietnam. In July they plan to travel to Canada for the Schürch Family Reunion.

Cary Adams, E14206342, is recovering from open heart surgery in March last year and a full hip replacement in December.

Eighty-six-year-old **Mabel Shirk**, from Virginia, is the winner of Herald of Hope's 2025 Read-A-Thon. In the month of December alone she read 10,000 pages and helped raise \$4,716 for Bible distribution.

Carolyn Strecker, E526313713, spent 3 days in Salt Lake City to attend RootsTech, the world's largest family history and genealogy event.

Kyle Mixon, E1420634112, was promoted to truck driver for Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles.

Debora Jean Potts Dillon, E142063621, was made partner in her law firm.

Megan Marie Dillon, E1420636211, is working on her PhD in Toxicology Research.



Schürch Tanne - Sumiswald

A poem by Jakob Käser, 1884-1969

D'TanneLinge

Frü isch's und um das Bänkli
Bi der Linge jutze d'Ching
Freut euch a euem Läbe
D'Jugendzyt verflügt so gschwing

D'Linge blüejt, und uf däm Bänkli
bencDrungerzueche brichte zwöi
Still vo Glück, vo ihrer Liebi
Vom ne eigne, chline Hei

Vo der Linge falle d'Bletter
Hübscheli uf wysses Haar,
U mi weis schier sälber nümme,
Was isch Troum gsi u was wahr.

The Fir Tree

It's spring, and around the bench
By the trees, the wind is blowing
Rejoice in your life
Your youth flies by so swiftly

The trees are blooming, and on the
Two young trees are breaking silently
Quietly with happiness, with their love
From their own, little home

From the trees, the leaves are falling
Pretty little ones onto white hair,
And I almost don't know for myself
What was a dream and what was true.

Jakob Käser was born in Madiswil on January 7, 1884, the son of a master blacksmith. His father died soon after he began his schooling. After apprenticeship, he took over the blacksmith shop at the age of 25.

However, physical work alone never satisfied him, nor ever robbed him of the joy of all things beautiful and, above all, literature. He wrote his verses and experiences as a blacksmith and gave them expression in poetic form.

Jakob's poems and short stories occasionally appeared in newspapers. Jakob sent them to the Sauerländer publishing house in Aarau, Switzerland. In this way, his verses and stories, designed in a true folk tone, found their way into the world. Source: Bernese literature 1925-1950, Francke 1949, pp. 91-92

The Ontario Archives and You

Ontario Ancestors
Ontario Genealogical Society
<https://ogs.on.ca/>



50th Anniversary Celebration

John & Sharon Shirk of Rockford, Illinois, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary last summer. It was the first time their three children and their families

have all been together at the same time and place. The twenty family members came from throughout the United States.



Their oldest, daughter and her husband, Jenna & Jeremy Thompson, are the only family members that live nearby in Northern Illinois. Jeremy is the pastor of a small church in Rockford and daughter Jenna has a master's degree in teaching. She homeschools their four children, two boys and two girls.

Son John and wife Mallie Shirk, live in Bradenton, Florida. John works at Sarasota Memorial Hospital and his wife Mallie works at The Classical Academy of Sarasota. They have six children: four boys and identical twin girls.

Their youngest, daughter and her husband, Emily & Neil Gregory, live in Nicholasville, Kentucky. Neil works at Southland Christian Church and Emily is a realtor for Keller Williams. They have two sweet daughters.



For the anniversary gathering, the family rented a lovely vacation home centrally located high in the mountains in Georgia near the Tennessee border. The home had 8 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, a massive great room with two lengthy tables with plenty of chairs, a huge kitchen with big island plus a lovely outdoor deck. A creek flowing through the property was enjoyed by the kids as they also wandered through the surrounding woods. It was a great opportunity for cousins to know each other.

Schürch Symposium Update

Symposium #9

Symposium #9 is coming up as part of the "Notable Schürch" sub-category of the symposium series.

Three Shirk Sisters – A Legacy of Community:

What do an actuary, a book editor, and a Gumdo (martial arts) master have in common?

Saturday, June 13, 2026: 5PM EDT, 4PM CDT, 3PM MDT, 2PM PDT

Watch for registration information coming soon by e-mail.

Minnesota sisters Lisa (Shirk) Carriere, Diane Shirk, and Susan Shirk attended their first SFANA Reunion in July 2024 and were impressed by the feeling of connection to the larger community of Schürchs in North America and Switzerland.

They had been active participants in past Symposia, including the Notable Schürchs series, which inspired them to think about their ancestors' contributions to their communities and consider how they have followed in those footsteps.

Join us as sisters Lisa, Diane and Susan share their stories of growing up as Shirks, discovering their family legacy of community, and finding their places in continuing that legacy.

Symposium #8

Held on November 1, 2025, Symposium #8 is available on YouTube at: https://youtu.be/3mxux-X_Vkk. You can also use this link to view previous symposia.

Schürch Migration from Switzerland to Northwestern USA by Donna (Schuerch) Love
Donna (Schuerch) Love, from Missoula, Montana documents the story of her great-grandparents, Johannes and Magdalene Schürch, who immigrated with their family of 12 children to the United States from Wasen,

Switzerland in 1884, settling first in Iowa, then South Dakota, and eventually in Oregon.

Donna has created a printable pdf file of her portion of this Symposium presentation with additional data. Please be aware that this is an ongoing project. As new research information becomes available, data may be modified or added to it. Donna welcomes other family members of the Johannes and Magdalene Schürch branch to use her story as a basis for their own. Donna has not copyrighted this data. Donna prepared a pdf of her presentation. It is [available here](#).

Donna Love has sent the following letter, encouraging others to record and share their family stories:

Dear Schürch Family Association,
I would like to thank the Schürch Family Association for helping me present my Schürch Family History for their Symposium Series. My program was completed for Symposium #8 and is now permanently online at the Schürch Family Association website. I loved learning about my family history, and sharing it with all. A big thank you to Margaret Sherk, Lloyd Sherk, Betty Sherk, and Ray Shirk. I had never done anything like this before and they made it all so easy. They were knowledgeable, helpful, and a joy to work with. If anyone is thinking about doing this for their family, have no fear. They will help. And a big thank you, also, to Vanessa Warner for her help with placing my Schürch Family photos on the Schürch Family Pinterest site, too. My Schürch/Schuerch family has enjoyed learning more, too. In fact, it has encouraged more and more of my family to come forward with many more stories and recollections.

Here's a 1890 cir. photograph of my great grandparents, Johannes and Magdalena Schürch and their 12 surviving children (they had 14 children total.) My grandfather, Johannes Jr., age 9, is standing in the back row on the right-hand side of the photo.

Continued on page 13

Continued from page 12



Thank you again for this wonderful opportunity.
Donna

Clyde Sherk Reaches 100 Years



Clyde Russell Sherk E1537941, is **100 years young**. He was born December 17th, 1926 to Russell and Viola Shoup Sherk.

Clyde has a sister Loma Grace Sherk Doan E1537942 born October 18th 1929 and they both are now residing at Portal Village in Port Colborne. Once Clyde had completed his high school education he started working at John Derer Welland Works until his retirement at 65 years. He worked his way up in the company, was Payroll Supervisor at one point and did hold higher positions.

Clyde went to Grace United Brethren in Christ Church most of his life and has many fond memories of cantatas directed by Albert Day. Clyde played the organ for church services and would occasionally preach when needed.



He belonged to Christian Endeavour Youth Organization when it was local only and then provincial and worldwide.

He travelled to many countries including Russia, Europe, China and Japan.

He enjoyed his garden and fruit trees which he took care of meticulously. They always had a Scottie dog which meant lots of daily walks. In 2022 Clyde and Loma attended the Sherk Family Association Reunion held at Crystal Ridge Ridgeway which they both enjoyed.

Clyde was driving up to 2 years ago and laments the fact he is no longer able to drive and enjoy his freedom. Clyde contributes his longevity to the fact his sister Loma served him delicious nutritious meals daily.

Sherk witnesses Puerto Vallarta Unrest

Doug Sherk, E14202231

“Wake up!” My husband stood above me, raising the shades in the bedroom. “Something weird is going on. There’s smoke everywhere.”

I rubbed my eyes, put on my glasses and threw on some clothes. Strolling into the living room I could see through the slider leading to the balcony a thick black plume rising from a source just beyond view, but clearly on our side of the river, on our side of the bridge. An explosion of some note drew me to the balcony. At both ends of the bridge we could see flames, from what we were unsure. Then, scanning our view of the heart of Zona Romantica, the city’s main tourist area, several dark black plumes of smoke rose, a light breeze forcing them to form a long line against the southern hills bordering the city.

We watched. Another explosion on the opposite side of the bridge at the north end of Zona Romantica, the flames shooting forty feet in the air, which swiftly became heavy and smelled acrid.

We went inside the apartment, shut windows and turned the AC on. It felt like we were under attack and our first thought was that maybe Washington had made good on the threats to invade Mexico to battle the cartels. But, why Puerto Vallarta? Of all the places in Mexico, this one was considered among the safest. Yes, a cartel was active in the area, but our friends who have lived here for thirty years told us a lack of infighting kept the area free of the turmoil that has racked Acapulco and other regions. Puerto Vallarta was considered off limits, a place, especially in neighboring Nayarit, which shares the Bay of Banderas.

Within an hour, as smoke continued to rise from different and increasing sources within a half-mile of our apartment, we lost internet



Continued on page 15

service and feared that whatever was going on would soon result in lost power and water. We filled pots. Our cell phones remained on. My husband went to the building's entry and was told by security no one was to leave the building. And that's when we learned what was causing the chaos. A cartel leader had been killed by the government.

Our cell phone remained active and texts from friends and family started arriving. Were we safe? There were pictures online showing the cathedral engulfed in flames, airport terminals being overrun, black smoke rising from the Costco. The only problem was these pictures, and film were largely untrue, created by A.I., the sole purpose apparently to convince everyone outside of Puerto Vallarta the place was burning down.

Only it wasn't. From our fifth-floor perch, we could see over the main Zona Romantica, smoke coming and going, bangs from the explosion of tires and gas tanks, but by the late afternoon the smoke was gone, except from the still burning Guadalajara Pharmacy. An emergency communications system set up by our HOA posted the Mexican government's red alert order. Stay at home, troops were being dispatched. We thought it was best to comply.

Around three o'clock in the afternoon friends posted on Facebook the most ominous report of the day. The cartel whose leader had been killed had supposedly issued an ultimatum; meet our demands by five o'clock, or we will start entering homes and hotels. The demands were not provided but we prepared for the worst. At four o'clock a military helicopter circled over the main tourist zone. Later we heard the purpose was to map the charred auto and bus carcasses so troops could remove them overnight. Five o'clock came without any reported home or hotel invasions.

We gathered with the residents of the other 92 units of our building on the roof for sunset, made extra pink by the smog. The sense of community was amazing. Those with supplies prepared hamburgers and pasta for those without food, especially the AirBnB renters who had arrived the day before. As darkness fell, we retreated to our respective units, followed reports from friends around the city, and responded to concerns from abroad about our safety. After a stressful, sometimes scary day, things were quiet and calm.

Overnight, the air for the most part cleared, the electricity, water and cell phone service remained uninterrupted, but the internet service remained off. At an 11 a.m. meeting organized by the HOA we learned the airport would remain closed for the morning, but domestic flights would resume in the late afternoon. However, the red alert remained in effect as troops with weapons mounted on the bed of trucks descended on the city. We ventured out to a bodega visible from our kitchen window, waited in line for about 15 minutes and bought things both needed and in the case of

potato chips, wanted. Mid-way through our shopping, the store's owner ended the one-at-a-time policy. For happy hour, we went to the roof for another fun, warm community gathering hosted by several owners. The air was clear, the sunset less spectacular, the front gate freely allowing residents in and out. We learned that the internet service had been interrupted by one of the enflamed cars burning a transformer...we all assumed it would be the end of the week before we saw service.

We went down to prepare dinner around 8 p.m. and, lo and behold, the wifi modem's four blinking green lights were lit. TV service returned, we watched the overdramatization of what had gone on reported by the American network's nightly news. On Facebook, a generally accurate and reliable source reported approximately 36 private vehicles had been stolen, positioned to block traffic and burned. Another 15 buses suffered a similar fate. The Oxxo and Guadalajara Pharmacy chains each lost several stores. We watched a locally produced video of masked thugs on motorcycles entering an Oxxo, which is similar to the 7-Elevens in the U.S., ordering people in the store out and then setting the facility on fire.

Over the next couple of days, a couple of facts became readily apparent. The government's response of killing a cartel leader rather than a traditional arrest led to a planned, coordinated reaction. The disruption to the city was purposeful but also focused on corporate entities. Mom and pop pharmacies and mercados and bodegas were left alone. Not one citizen, resident or tourist was killed in Puerto Vallarta. The red alert was lifted Monday night; we went to one of the supermarkets via Uber on Tuesday morning and aside from eggs experienced little in the way of missing SKUs. Costco, across the street, still stood, although its gasoline service was charred. The store opened on Wednesday when most international air carriers resumed service to the international airport.

What was also apparent was that some tourists behaved in a manner deserving the locals' disdain. The only looting that was captured on video was of two decidedly looking North American white men, one, unfortunately, carrying a Maple Leaf shopping bag entering a smoldering store and then leaving minutes later with the bag obviously filled, with what we couldn't tell. And then we saw the pundits in mainstream media counseling readers to rethink their spring break plans adding to the fear caused by fake postings of burning cathedrals and mass hysteria at airports. Cancellations poured in. We were told last week after returning from a long planned nine day trip to Los Angeles and New York, some 30,000 cancellations of hotel and rental bookings had been made, which is very sad as the season here ends at the end of April and this last month can make the difference between a small hotel, a tour guide, a

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restaurant owner, an Uber driver, most of the Puerto Vallarta economy from making it, or shutting down.

For those of you seeking a good vacation deal, take a look at Puerto Vallarta...the planes here are less than half full, the hotels are offering unheard of discounts, and the crowds are thin. It took all of 72 hours for the city to return to normal.

**Cartel violence erupts in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico
after killing of drug lord "El Mencho"**
CBS Philadelphia, February 24, 2026



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Schurch “Q” and “A”

HISTORICAL COMMITTEE & PHOTO GALLERY REPORTS

Vanessa A Warner

Chairman Historical Committee

Coordinator,



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Our Association Historians, Website and Flickr Committees have again been busy responding to queries since our Oct. 2025 report. We have also had the help of other family cousins who have provided us with newer information to help us update our database. Our summary report from each of those submitting queries (as underlined) is as follows:

Carolyn Strecker (carolyn.strecker@gmail.com) – Carolyn is always busy, working with various Schurchs that surface, looking for assistance...I will leave her to report on her activity.

Margaret Sherk (margaretsherk1@outlook.com) found articles on the Sherston Facebook page, mentioning Fletcher Sherk and his twin sister, Florence A. Sherk Casler. They are in our database as **E142534/E153534** and **E142533/E153533** respectively.

Vanessa Warner (vanessa.warner@rogers.com) – Update on the **E152** David Sherk Cemetery, Port Colborne, ON – Further updates on the progress in cleaning up/transcription of the cemetery as weather progresses. Here are photos as of November 2025.

Claude Beagarie (ckbbeagarie@gmail.com) has been in touch with a query regarding his gr grandmother, “Alice Shirk”, born in Sherston. After some digging online, we were able to determine “Alice” was actually Alice Maude Sherk, daughter of **E1548 George Sherk** and Julia Ann Barney. Unfortunately, we had no further information on this line in our database, as the last entry in our database recorded the marriage of George and Julia, with no family researched. Between Part 1 and Part 2 of my deep-dive into Code B, I did some research on this family and with Claude’s input, Carolyn’s diligent scrutiny and finally Justin’s revelation, this information has been added to the database. Claude shared two photos in the course of research eleven more were found.

E419521112 Mike Schurch (in8dc@yahoo.com) noticed the prompt on Facebook to view “Schurchs Who Have Served” in honour of Remembrance/Veterans Day, and sent in six photos of four generations in his family who have served.

Sharon Brooking (sbrookin@yahoo.com), of the H4411 line contributed forty photos of family, which have been uploaded into Flickr.

Donna Schuerch Love (donnalovebooks@gmail.com) contributed twenty-seven photos of the Johannes Schurch – Immigrant 1884 line. You will remember Donna offered a great presentation back in November 2025.

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An obituary was submitted for **Brian Stuart Sherk** of Stoney Creek, who died 23 Dec 2025 in Stoney Creek, Ontario. Brian had been born in Fort Erie. He was the son of **Stuart Glen Sherk**, who died in Collingwood in 2021. Unfortunately, Stuart's obituary did not state his parents or siblings. Brian's sister, **Wendy Ann Sherk**, died in 2022 in Collingwood. Likely this family would be Code N or Code E. Anyone who can help identify this family, please contact Vanessa.

A communication has been received from **Litany Zenz** (lzenz@tcco.com). Her research has lead her descent from John A. Shirk, born in 1828 in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, died on 10 Jun 1877 in Montgomery Co., Ohio. He married Sarah Ellen Sharrit (1855-1909). We have been unable to connect John A. Shirk to his family in Pennsylvania and if anyone researching Shirks/Sherks in Lebanon, PA can help, please contact Vanessa.

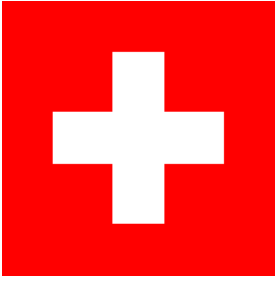
A phone call was received from **Sarah Missios** (sarahmissios@gmail.com) of Peterborough, ON. After discussion and some research, it was determined that she is descended from **H42182-H14 Asaph Elihn Sherk (Sherrick)** and his wife **H44115 Elizabeth Sherk**.

Update on ongoing research on **Code B Vijt David Scherkes/Scherges/Yerkes/Yerkey/Archey**: I am pleased to report that the research on Codes B1 and B21 are almost complete. Work will continue on B22 and B3. 853 photos have been uploaded to Flickr, including two descendants who play Big League Baseball in the early 1900s! I have also connected with a descendant via Ancestry who has indicated he would be interested in our Y-DNA project. Mr. Yerkes has been given contact information for Justin. Hopefully there will be an update on Code B and where they fit.

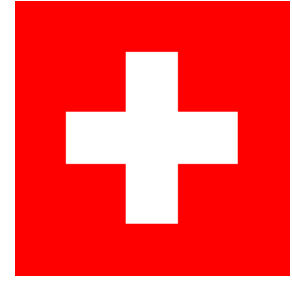
As for the Schürch Photo Gallery, we are at 2563 photos and growing. The link is <https://www.flickr.com/photos/113857348@N06/albums/>. Again, I want to thank Stephen Freeman for his help with editing some of the photos that are in rough condition. He is truly a miracle worker. Many of the old photos we are finding are crumbling, faded or crumpled. AI has allowed Stephen to restore these old photos.

Our Association Historical Committee is always looking for new Historians and those interested in working on our Database, DNA and other genealogical research Committees. If interested please contact our Historical Chair.





Different Flags



SGNS Meets in Kilchberg, Canton Zurich

19 SGNS members met in Restaurant Ochsen in Kilchberg. Firstly, the most important and positive information: The SGNS will continue with a new treasurer; this was a great relief to all those present who sincerely hoped and wished that the SGNS would continue to exist for years to come.

The discussion concerning this agenda item was long and intensive. Overwhelming joy spread throughout the attendees when Glen accepted the job as treasurer of the SGNS. Furthermore, Roman expressed his wish to join the board and this was highly appreciated. Two new and younger members bring new possibilities and new ideas. The overall atmosphere brightened considerably and at 11:45 the meeting could be adjourned.

The aperitif, as usual white wine, was served with small finger-sized pieces of pizza. A tasty meal followed. In the morning, I was still referring to this meal as the “last” meal. Luckily, I could change that name to a “successor’s” meal.

Marlene informed us it was time to leave for the Lindt Museum called the Home of Chocolate. The theme was now chocolate. A pleasant young lady guided us through different exhibition rooms and gave us many interesting explanations. At the end of the tour everybody could help themselves to delicious Lindt chocolate balls.

The chocolate fountain (flowing chocolate starting from just under the top of the fountain and running down into a basin) was an interesting site and was given special attention by the visitors.



German Version

19 Mitglieder versammelten sich im Restaurant Ochsen in Kilchberg. Das Wichtigste und Positive gleich vorneweg: Die SGNS macht weiter mit einem neuen Kassier und erlöst alle die das Weiterbestehen gewünscht haben.

Die Diskussion darüber war lange und intensiv. Und die Freude nach der Zusage von Glen das Amt des Kassierers zu übernehmen war groß. Auch als Roman, sich anerbote im Vorstand mitzuwirken herrschte Freude. Zwei neue jüngere Vorstandsmitglieder bringen neues Blut und neue Ideen. Die allgemeine Stimmung stieg merklich und um 11:45 konnten wir die Versammlung schließen.

Der Aperito mit Weißwein und kleinen Pizzastückchen mundete bestens. Das Mittagessen, welches ich am morgen noch als Henkersmalzeit benannt hatte, mundete allen.



Zeitig rief Marlenen zum Aufbruch zum Lindt Museum auf. Das Thema hieß nun Schokolade. Eine nette Dame führte uns durch verschiedene Ausstellungsräume und gab auch interessante Erklärungen ab. Am Schluss durfte sich jeder mit den Lindt-kugeln bedienen.

Am meisten Aufmerksamkeit galt dem Schokolade Brunnen

Obituaries

Brian Stuart Sherk 1959-2026



It is with broken hearts and disbelief that we announce the sudden passing of Brian Stuart Sherk, he was called home on Tuesday December 23, 2025 at the age of 66 years old. Born in Ft. Erie, Ontario, on October 4, 1959, Brian built a life filled with kindness, compassion, humour, hard work, and a great love for his family and friends.

Brian is survived by his wife, Judy Stempski of thirty one years and loving brother Scott (Leslie). He is survived by loving nieces, great-nieces and great-nephews. He was a loving and cherished son and predeceased by parents, Stuart and Joan Sherk. Brian is also predeceased by brother David, and sister Wendy Sherk. Brian is survived by his sister-in-law, Susan MacNeil (Fraser), brothers-in-law Ron Stempski (Joan) and Robert Stempski, nephews, daughter-in-law, Jennifer Iachelli (Carm), granddaughter, Claire and grandson, Adam. Brian is survived by numerous and very close friends.

Brian worked diligently throughout his life and continued to work past retirement at Broadleaf Landscaping as well as on his passion of “small engine repair”. There was never a push lawnmower, riding lawnmower, snowblower or snowmobile that he couldn’t repair or restore. He was also very creative and loved working on cars and trucks. Brian loved swap meets, car shows, garage sales and Amazon Binz. Brian was also blessed with many other talents as professional house painting, carpentry, electrical and dry walling. Brian’s other loves in his life were our dogs, Sophie, Maggie, Molly and Summer.

Cremation took place and Brian’s Celebration of Life was held on Saturday, January 17th, 2026, at Donald V. Brown Funeral Home. In lieu of flowers and because of Brian’s love of dogs, a donation to [Canadian Guide Dogs For The Blind](#) would be greatly appreciated.

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Clarence N. Shirk
1962-2025
E161253D7

It is with a heavy heart that we announce the passing of Kutztown Area Auctioneer, Clarence N. Shirk, 63, of Maxatawny Township, beloved husband, father, grandfather, brother and friend. Clarence was born on July 1, 1962, in Kutztown, Pennsylvania, and spent his life deeply rooted in his community and passed away suddenly on Wednesday evening, November 5, 2025. He was the husband of Louise B. (Snyder) Shirk, whom he married on November 14, 1985.

Born on his family farm in Maxatawny Township, Clarence was a son of the late Ivan W. and Emma H. (Nolt) Shirk and was a member of Walnuttown Mennonite Church, Weaverland Conference, Fleetwood. Clarence attended Reading Area Community College where he received his Auctioneering Certification. He had been an auctioneer since 1998, having owned and operated Saucony Hall - Clarence N. Shirk Auction Service in Kutztown. Clarence dedicated his life to serving others and creating opportunities for thousands of buyers and sellers alike. He approached his work with passion, integrity, and a commitment to his craft, leaving a legacy that will be remembered by many. Clarence was also heavily involved with The Kutztown Produce Auction since its inception. Clarence and Louise were the former co-owners of Wooden Bridge Dry Goods in Kutztown from 1998 until 2010. Prior to his career as an auctioneer, Clarence worked in construction and was employed by Martin Construction, Kutztown, for 20 years.

Along with his wife of nearly 40 years, Clarence is survived by seven children, 21 grandchildren, and seven siblings – including Laura, Alice and Beatrice who helped with Schürch reunion auctions. Funeral services were held on November 10, 2025 at Walnuttown Mennonite Church, 1219 Pleasant Hill Road, Fleetwood, PA.



Clarence Sherk
Lancaster Farming:
<https://obits.ludwickfh.com/clarence-shirk>

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James “Randy” Randall Scherck
1959-2025
H22711344



Scherck – James “Randy” Randall Scherck, age 66, of Starke, Florida, passed away peacefully on September 16, 2025, at Bedrock Rehabilitation Center in Live Oak, Florida. Randy was born on March 26, 1959, in Belleview, Ohio, to the late Richard and Florance Ann Scherck. He attended and graduated from High school in Ohio before proudly enlisting in the Army National Guard, where he served with dedication for many years. In the late 1980s, Randy married his beloved wife and best friend, Betty Jane Sloan. Shortly after, the couple relocated to Florida, where they raised their children and built their forever home. While still serving in the National Guard, Randy and his family spent time living in several places, including Germany and Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Following his honorable discharge, Randy began his career as a truck driver, hauling produce, lumber, and logs across the country. In his spare time, he enjoyed the thrill of drag racing on the weekends. Randy will be remembered as a kind and loving

soul who touched the lives of many and will be deeply missed by all who knew him. He is preceded in death by his parents, Richard and Florance Ann Scherck; loving wife, Betty Jane Scherck; son, James Dewitt Drown; brothers, Sam and Bob Scherck; sisters, Marie and Karen Scherck; and grandson, Kenneth David Drown Jr.

Randy is survived by his children, Rachel (Charles) Parson of Starke, FL; and Kenneth Drown of Ohio; brother, John Scherck; 4 grandchildren and 14 great grandchildren.

Arrangements were under the care and direction of V. Todd Ferreira Funeral Services and Archie Tanner Memorial Chapel, Starke, Fl. 904-964-5757.

To send flowers to the family of James “Randy” , please [visit our floral store.](#)



Ralph Richard Houser
1930-2026
H4312480



Ralph Richard Houser, Sr., 95, of Valley View, rural Bellefonte, a loving husband, father and grandfather, passed away Monday, Jan. 12, 2026, at Centre Care. He lived independently at home until his health declined in November due to COVID-19 and pneumonia.

<https://www.lockhaven.com/obituaries/2026/01/ralph-richard-houser-sr/> 1/33/14/26, 8:35 PM

Ralph Richard Houser, Sr. | News, Sports, Jobs - The Express. Born Dec. 11, 1930, in Valley View, he was the youngest child of the late Miles and Gertrude (Spicer) Houser. Ralph grew up in Valley View, helping out on the family farm, and was a 1948 graduate of Bellefonte High

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School. In his youth he played baseball with the Valley View Wildcats.

On Dec. 16, 1952, in Frederick, Md., he married the love of his life, the former Shirley Louise Shawley, who passed away on April 29, 2015, after 62 years of marriage.

During the Korean War, Ralph served in the U.S. Army from 1952 to 1954 and was honorably discharged with the rank of Corporal. He operated the engines at a repeater station near Inchon, Korea. He also guarded prisoners in California. Ralph took many photographs and slides documenting daily life in Korea, and in later years he enjoyed recounting stories of his experience in the Army.

Ralph came home to Valley View and moved next door to his parents, where he and Shirley lived the rest of their lives. He worked for Titan Metal Company, later Cerro Copper and Brass, from which he retired in 1992 after 37 years of service.

Among other jobs, Ralph also worked for his father-in-law, J. Henry Shawley, in his cement finishing business. He was handy with everything and was always busy around the home.

Ralph enjoyed hunting. He liked to sing, loved to cook and enjoyed ice cream almost every day.

He enjoyed watching Penn State football, the Pittsburgh Steelers and old westerns. Most of all, he loved spending time with his family and helping them throughout their lives. Ralph helped care for his parents in their declining years. For many years they vacationed at Wildwood and Stone Harbor, N.J., and later he and Shirley had a regular camper spot at Grange Fair.

They also traveled to many states with their daughter, Susan, as she showed her Bernese Mountain Dogs. Ralph and Shirley loved babysitting the dogs. <https://www.lockhaven.com/obituaries/2026/01/ralph-richard-houser-sr/2/33/14/26>, 8:35 PM

Ralph Richard Houser, Sr. | News, Sports, Jobs - The Express. Since 1942, Ralph was a member of the Greater Buffalo Run Valley United Methodist Church (originally Valley View United Brethren Church). He served as Sunday School Superintendent and Church Trustee. He lived a quiet, faithful Christian life and will be remembered as a kind and patient man.

Ralph is survived by his children, Ralph Houser, Jr. (Catherine), of Valley View, and Susan Houser (Kenneth Robinson), of Bellefonte; and two grandchildren, Justin Houser (Lindsey Wilson), of Zion, and Jamilyn Houser, of Valley View.

In addition to his parents and wife, he was predeceased by nine siblings, Andrew Houser, Adalean Bilger, Russell Houser, Willis Houser, an infant brother, Morris Houser, Ethel Ishler, Verna Corman and Earl Houser; as well as by a special nephew, Earl Houser, Jr.

Visitation took place at Wetzler Funeral Service, Inc., on Friday, Jan. 16, 2026, followed by the funeral service at 11 at the funeral home, with Pastor James Jacobs officiating. Burial with military honors will follow at Meyer Cemetery, Benner Township. Online condolences may be made to the family at www.wetzlerfuneralhome.com



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**Wendy Ann Sherk
1958-2022**

Wendy Ann Sherk died peacefully on Saturday November 12, 2022 at Campbell House Hospice, Collingwood at the age of 64. Wendy of Wasaga Beach, loving mother of Holly Edwards (Garry Donaldson) and Carly Bartoletti (Sean Harding). Cherished grandmother of Jaxson Edwards, Maddox and Chase Donaldson and Myla Harding. Much loved daughter of Joan and the late Stuart Sherk. Dear sister of Brian Sherk (Judy Stempski), Scott Sherk (Leslie) and the late David Sherk.

Wendy was a kind and fun-loving woman who cherished her family and her community. She was a long time representative of the Sun newspapers, was a devoted member of the Wasaga Beach Lioness club and gave back to her community through various organizations and events. She will be deeply missed.

Friends were invited to join her family at the Carruthers & Davidson Funeral Home, 509 River Road West, Wasaga Beach on Saturday November 19, 2022 from 1 to 4 p.m. for a come and go celebration of her life. Light refreshments were served. If desired, a donation to the Princess Margaret Cancer Foundation or Hospice Georgian Triangle Foundation for Campbell House would be appreciated by her family. To sign Wendy's Book of Memories, please visit www.carruthersdavidson.com.



Cologne Cathedral: A Personal Connection

Ken Sherk, St. Catharines, ON
N13D462, E152332362

I had the privilege of going on the 2025 Sherk Heritage Tour this past September. One of our stops was at the Cologne Cathedral in Germany. I have always been interested in seeing this cathedral because of a photo that my father, Mark Sherk who was with the RCAF during WW2, brought back to Canada after the war. It shows the destruction of Cologne around the cathedral.

Evidently the allied pilots used the cathedral as a navigational landmark because of its size which is why it was not destroyed. The cathedral suffered damage from 14 bomb strikes but was reparable after the war. My wife, Erli, and I took advantage of being able to climb the tower stairs to immerse ourselves with the photo view.



Christianity is documented as far back as 313A.D. when Cologne was a Roman city. The 1st church on the site dates back to the 6th century. In 1164 it was decided to build a new cathedral to commemorate and house relics of the 3 Wise Men (Mathew 2:1-12) that was donated to Cologne by Emperor Friedrich from Italy. The cornerstone for the new gothic cathedral was laid in 1248 and it took 632 years to complete in 1880. The many builders over the centuries used the same architectural plans to preserve the continuity of the structure. The cathedral is 515 feet tall, 475 feet long and 283 feet at its widest point. It is the tallest twin spired church in the world and is a UNESCO - World Heritage Site.