

***The Last Hurrah — A Man and His Music.* By Larry A. EWAHEN. 1994. Spirit Wrestiers Associates, R.R.#1, Site 2, Comp. B4, Castlegar, B.C. VIN 3H7.**

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The Last Hurrah — A Man and His Music. By Larry A. EWASHEN. 1994. Spirit Wrestlers Associates, R.R.#1, Site 2, Comp. B4, Castlegar, B.C. V1N 3H7.

The collection of Doukhobor hymns and popular songs by Nick N. Kalmakoff has gone through more than half a dozen versions of home-bound editions. Beginning in the 1950s I recall copies being circulated in my family in Saskatchewan and used regularly in sobranie gatherings during Sunday prayer services, funerals, or just social gatherings. Kalmakoff was eighteen years old when in 1927, living on farm near Canora, Saskatchewan, he attended his first Sunday service and this stimulated him to begin his own song collection. After retiring to Vancouver, in 1990 Nick made his last *Sbornik*.

As luck would have it, Doukhobor filmmaker, singer, and writer Larry A. Ewashen was on hand to record this "Last Hurrah," as Nick called it, in an interesting half-hour video documenting the process of collecting, typing, printing, cutting, binding, as well as seeing a sobranie in process in Vancouver. Nick's sources include selections that he found in Russia (brought over to Canada by the early Doukhobors in 1899), from singers in his province of

Saskatchewan where sixty-one Doukhobor villages once flourished, from Alberta, and from his new home in British Columbia. Selections include those from M. Lermontov, S. Nadson, Ivan Prokhanov, Harry Vereschagin, Ivan Sysoev (the most prolific Doukhobor poet and songwriter of all time), along with several compositions from singer Harry Vereschagin, Ivan Planidin, William Soukoreff, G. Dergousoff, Nick Kalmakoff, Molokans, and others.

These are hymns and songs of sorrow, love, joy, universal brotherhood, struggles against injustice, violence, wars and inequality, and a new civilized era in humanity. They serve to soothe the body and soul in time of human tribulations. Also they serve as carriers of history and philosophy for the young and old. Like the warp and woof of Doukhobor weaving, singing is an integral part of the Doukhobor spirit.

Larry Ewashen's video captures Nick's interest (beginning with his use of an old school scribbler in the 1920s), dedication, and creativity of what turned out to be a successful cottage industry spanning several decades. The close-ups of faces, hands, bread-salt-water, books, University of British Columbia Library, where several versions of his book are housed, together with narration by the craftsman and the haunting sounds of a cappella singing, make this a unique audio-visual contribution to the understanding of the importance of singing in Doukhobor folklore.

This is a good companion piece to the earlier one-hour film documentary *In Search of Utopia : The Doukhobors*, which Larry Ewashen produced in cooperation with historical consultant Koozma J. Tarasoff. With the Doukhobor Centennials in 1995 and 1999 marking the 1895 Burning of Firearms in Tsarist Russia and observing the coming of 7,500 Doukhobors to Canada, these videos are an important source for ethnographers, museums, television producers, educators and folklore libraries, as well as the general audience. Both films serve to correct some of the many misconceptions that have been unjustly levied at these Canadian citizens by sensationalistic media.

Perceptive school librarians across the country ought to consider purchasing both copies for their multicultural collections. Young people deserve to get the best picture that they can about a much misunderstood peoples — the Spirit Wrestlers or Doukhobors. There are some 30,000 of them in Canada, 500 in the USA, and 30,000 in Russia. What better way of seeing and

hearing the sounds of these people at work and at play than through the research and productions of the children of the ancestors themselves?

Koozma J. TARASOFF

Writer/Photojournalist

Stories From Doukhobor History. By Eli A. POPOFF. (Grand Forks, B.C. : Union of Spiritual Communities of Christ, 1992, 159 pp.) *Katya : A Canadian Doukhobor* (Leningrad : TITUL and LenArt, 1991, 124 pp.) Available from USCC, Grand Forks, B.C.

Eli A. Popoff, born in 1921 on a farm near the town of Blaine Lake, Saskatchewan, has lived first as an Independent farmer and then, being editor of *Iskra* and author of Doukhobor materials, as an Orthodox Doukhobor community activist in the interior of British Columbia. In these two books, the author draws on his personal experiences, on his readings in Russian and English, as well as on interviews with senior citizens in bringing to life the early and current history of the Spirit Wrestlers/ Doukhobors. While he sides heavily with the Orthodox Doukhobors, he makes an attempt to provide understanding from both the independent and zealot points of view.

The first book is a collection of translated articles on Doukhobors which he began in 1954, largely initiated in filling a gap for teaching curriculum materials in Sunday School Meetings. The emphasis is on the positive human interest stories, especially that which glorifies the central leadership line. This line is emphasized because the author considers the Orthodox group, with all its resources (large community centres, the Sunday School program, annual youth festivals, committees, and an Honorary Chairman), to be the central thrust for the survival of the Doukhobor movement.

His target audience is clear. In his own words, he dedicates the work "to all the members of the younger generations of Doukhobors who are seeking a true pathway of life, with the hope that they will evaluate correctly all the worthy ideals and