Views from the Pews

Tom and Sonja Shindruk

Recently, I had the opportunity to share tea and an engaging conversation with Tom and Sonja. I frequently see them at St. Stephens during the 10:30 Divine Liturgy. On one particular Sunday, they were recognised for their 70th wedding anniversary and announced that both were 90 years old. It was truly remarkable, as both Tom and Sonja seemed far younger than their real ages. When I spoke with them that afternoon, not only did they appear youthful, but they also radiated an extraordinary enthusiasm for life. I was compelled to discover their secret!

Both Tom and Sonja were born in Manitoba but in different towns. They first met at Tom's brother's wedding in Winnipeg in 1954, fell in love and married in September 1955.

Sonja held teaching positions in Manitoba, Ontario and in Calgary. She also worked in lady's boutiques. She loves singing and sang in the choir of every church they belonged to. Sonja dedicated much of her life to being a mother, wife, and homemaker, she truly excelled in all these roles.

Tom spent most of his career in the food industry, primarily in the Fresh Produce Industry and Food Service sector. His work in this field lasted from 1952 to 1975 and took him and Sonja to several cities across Canada. From 1971 to 1993, Tom and Sonja lived in Calgary, Drumheller, where they owned and managed a hotel, and Edmonton, before eventually returning to Calgary for good in 1993, once again joining St. Stephens Parish. Tom and Sonja shared that joining a church creates a supportive community where you can build lasting friendships. Tom began working part-time as a classroom instructor in the Oil and Gas Industry in 2008 and officially retired from paid employment on his 90th birthday in July 2025.

Tom and Sonja have three children, a grandson and great granddaughter living in Mexico, and are step-grandparents to a granddaughter and a grandson. Sadly, their eldest son passed away in 2008. They cherish the time they spend with their family.

Tom has beaten cancer four times, while Sonja is also a survivor. Since 2000, Tom has been volunteering with the Canadian Cancer Society and is now heading a fundraising campaign with a goal of raising $1 million for cancer research this year. Throughout his time with the CCS, Tom has received five awards in recognition of his efforts and achievements in promoting awareness and securing funds for cancer research. He continues to contribute to community services, acting as President and Board Member of the Developmental Disability Resource Centre and serving on the Calgary Prolife Association board for three years and has been a member of the Knights of Columbus for 47 years. His commitment to volunteering has led to many awards. In addition, Tom is the author of *Never Give Up – 12 Ways to Have an Outstanding Life*, a recommended book that offers practical and impactful suggestions for achieving a fulfilling life.

What motivates Tom and Sonja to remain active and engaged at the age of 90?

"Every city we lived in we found a church that became our spiritual home. It's where we met a variety of people, made lasting friendships and learned to get along with others. God gave us strength, knowledge and ability to overcome life's challenges. Now as we are in our 90s, we both enjoy living with Positivity and Gratitude. God continues to Bless us with good health, positive attitudes, wisdom, knowledge, determination and ability to do things that will benefit others. God tells us to NEVER GIVE UP."

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