

Anne: A Biography

Early Years and Childhood

Anne's parents, John Teichroeb and Elizabeth Siemens, were both born in 1929 in the Mennonite-settled colonies of Chihuahua, Mexico. They both grew up as field workers before meeting as young adults, then marrying in their early twenties. After marrying, they were able to start a home in the barn that stood on property owned by John's father. John's father was a successful farmer, and John was hoping to receive support from his family as he began building a life with his wife. They had two children during the time that they were living in the barn: Elizabeth (who would go by Betty) and Richard (Rick).

However, it quickly became apparent that the young family would not be receiving support from John's father. Indeed, he had a reputation for being cold and cruel, and John would later tell his family that he had been a physically abusive father. He



was not interested in supporting John financially despite John's poverty, and John remained a field labourer along with his wife, who would work

whenever she wasn't at home caring for their children.

Finally, after considering his prospects, John decided to take his family and move to Canada in hopes of finding a more sustainable livelihood. The family moved to Saskatoon, where Elizabeth had some relations who were able to find field jobs for John's family. It was in Saskatoon that Anne was born on March 12, 1956 – between the births of her older brother Bill and her younger sister Sarah, who tragically died in infancy from pneumonia. Her younger brother Pete was also born in Saskatoon following Sarah's death.



But the family did not find stability in Saskatoon for long. Soon after Pete's birth, John felt it was best to move his family back to the Mennonite colonies of Mexico, where he felt he had a new opportunity working in the farms there. However, soon after moving back to Mexico, it was decided that Ontario,

Canada presented the best opportunities, and the family was soon moved there. Thus began the family's decades-long cycle of searching for stability between areas in southern Ontario, the

Mennonite-settled areas of northern Mexico and Manitoba, and stops in the southern United States. John's children later described him as having "itchy feet" – rarely could he set down roots in any particular setting before his eyes began to wander towards greener pastures, often returning to Mexico in winters for field work while his northern destinations were covered in snow. Even just a rumour of economic promise would be enough to convince John to pack up and move his family somewhere new. Reluctantly, Elizabeth would heed her husband's wishes and support his decisions to move. Not until nearly all of the children had grown to adulthood would John and Elizabeth spend two consecutive years in the same country.

As a result, Anne experienced little stability during her childhood. Constant moving and changing scenery made friendships outside her immediate family near impossible to maintain. Her closest relationships were with her siblings Bill and Betty. But she loved and cared for all of her siblings, especially the youngest three, who were born after moving away from Saskatoon – John, Mary and Cathy.

Along with living in a perpetual state of transition, Anne's childhood was made more challenging by her family's deep levels of poverty. Despite always searching for prosperity, John seldom found it. During Anne's first years, John and Elizabeth could afford no luxuries and often struggled to find the means to feed their children. Indeed, much of the stability the family found as Anne grew up was thanks to the contributions of the Teichroeb children – they were able to work in the fields with their parents, or else care for the younger children, enabling more adults to work. For this reason, Anne never had a true childhood. Her earliest years were marked by poverty and the fight to simply survive, with little opportunity for play. Her later childhood was filled with either long hours working in fields in Chihuahua, Ontario, Florida, or Manitoba, or caring for her younger siblings. She had little time for hobbies, and she was often an outsider in a foreign land, no matter where she was living.

It was not an easy childhood, but fortunately Anne had an easy temperament. She was soft-spoken and quiet like her father, and rarely complained about the work she endured. She

was a good older sibling and spent her spare time nurturing her younger sisters, who have fond memories of her braiding their hair. She was in most aspects practical and grounded. Her siblings were often entranced by superhero comic books and Elvis Presley, but Anne had simpler tastes. She would often collect sticks and rocks while working in the field and build



herself a model wood cabin in the evening. She also began to be interested in art and would sketch horses with the meager art

supplies she had. Yet many of her interests were less aligned with traditional female roles. She was something of a tomboy – rather than playing with dolls, she spent her free time tinkering and fixing things around the house. One of her few frivolous interests included dressing up as a cowboy with her brothers and acting out shooting scenarios.

Anne was never able to spend the amount of time in one spot needed to settle into a proper education. During her time in Canada, she learned English while living on the property of the family's English-speaking landlords and spending time with their Canadian children. However, she didn't learn to write as a child and would struggle with writing for the rest of her life, often feeling self-conscious of her spelling as an adult.

As she grew into a young woman, she began exploring more of her own interests. She was religious like the rest of her family and listened to the popular hymns of the time. She also enjoyed gospel and country music by Don Williams and Jim Reeves. She even began wearing makeup and doing up her hair, despite these practices being considered taboo in her Mennonite communities. But Anne was an attractive young lady and began drawing the attention of the young men in the communities where she settled. There was one man whose attention soon grew into something more.

Early Adulthood

Neil was the son of a pharmacist living in *Campo* 107 in Chihuahua, Mexico. It was in Mexico that Anne, now living in a small home next to a cheese factory with her family, would meet Neil.

“I had to get cream from the cheese factory for my dad every morning,” Neil said in an interview. “That’s when I first



met her. Something said to me, ‘You’re going to marry that girl.’”

The two dated for several years after this encounter, though often from a distance due to Anne’s family’s constant moving. Finally, after countless moves, Anne

put her foot down in Simcoe, Ontario.

“It got to the point where she locked herself in her room,” Neil said. “She put something in front of her door so

nobody could get in. She didn't go to work anymore and just stayed in her room. She told her dad, 'I want you to go to Mexico and bring my boyfriend back to me.'"

To appease her wishes, John did just that. He made the three-day journey and arrived at Neil's home in Mexico and explained the situation. Despite his desire to be with Anne, Neil explained that he couldn't go to her, as he did not have a passport and was not a Canadian citizen. However, John explained that he had already considered this. He handed Neil his son Bill's birth certificate, as he was born in the same year as Neil. The Canadian birth certificate didn't have a picture included. "You're going to be Bill when we cross the border," John explained. And with this solution in place, the two took off for Canada to reunite the two young romantics.

Soon after moving to the Aylmer area, Neil and Anne married in a customary wedding ceremony in Walsingham Old Colony Mennonite Church on June 8, 1973. In traditional Mennonite fashion, the ceremony took place immediately after a Sunday church service, and they got married alongside other engaged couples during the same ceremony. They moved into a

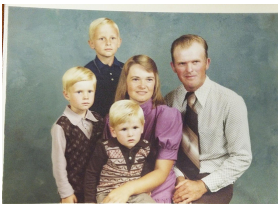
camping trailer that they were to call home, and worked in the tobacco fields the day after their wedding. Neil was 19, and Anne had turned 17 just three months before she was married.



Early Married Life

Just as when she was a child, Anne had to work hard to earn a living as a young married woman. She and Neil toiled in fields for meager wages. However, unlike her parents, once Anne was married she was resolute in laying down roots and staying in one place. Anne and Neil moved to the Aylmer area in southern Ontario soon after being married, and never moved far from there, with the exception of one brief stint working in Mexico. The two eventually bought property and then spent much of their adult life in their home in nearby Mt Salem.

At the age of 18, Anne gave birth to her first child, John. Two years after this, she had her second son, Terry, and then two years later she gave birth to her third and youngest son,



Ed. During their early years, she played the role of caregiver to her sons while her husband earned a living in the tobacco fields. Yet their financial situation often required that both Neil and Anne contribute financially, so Anne decided it was time to pursue additional avenues for income.

Sample Only -- Middle years not included

Tragedy Among the Teichroeb Family

This general peacefulness would not last long. When Anne was in her fifties, a string of tragedies descended on the Teichroeb family. After years of moves and change, Anne's father John had settled in Seminole, Texas, where he had lived with Elizabeth for several decades. However, he was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes as a senior, and after years of not properly tending to his condition, he passed away in 2012 at the age of 83. After John's passing, Anne's mother Elizabeth was moved to Winkler, Manitoba, where she was able to use her Canadian citizenship to access senior care, as well as live nearer to her relatives. But soon after the move, Anne's brother Rick, also living in Manitoba, was diagnosed with colon cancer with a grim prognosis. Rick turned down chemotherapy, and as his condition worsened, Anne, along with her sisters Betty and Mary, flew to Manitoba to see him. Yet only an hour before arriving to see him, Rick succumbed to his illness. His funeral was set for the week following, but as the week progressed, Betty's mental health deteriorated. Anne volunteered to forego

the funeral in order to tend to Betty and be with her on her flight home.

But not long after Rick's passing, the most tragic death Anne would experience came to pass: Betty, Anne's beloved older sister who was never fully able to overcome her ongoing struggle with mental illness, died from overmedication. The circumstances surrounding Betty's death remain unclear to this day, namely whether or not the overmedication was intentionally self-inflicted or accidental. This lack of closure took a toll on Anne, as if losing her sister was not reason enough for grief.

Yet the grieving process could not even begin before Anne would have another loved one to mourn. Her mother, Elizabeth, was also not of sound health. She had been diagnosed with dementia soon after the death of her husband, and soon after Betty's death, Elizabeth's mind deteriorated to the point where she could not carry out any daily functions independently. She died only two months after Betty's death, both in 2014. In essentially two years, Anne had lost her father, mother, a brother, and a sister.

End of Life

Still, the misfortune that had struck the Teichroeb family had more devastation to deal out. Anne's sister Mary recalled that early in 2016, the two had been vacationing together in Indiana when Anne commented that she felt blessed in regards to her health. While her younger sister had trouble walking during their vacation due to arthritis, Anne was experiencing a fortunate streak of feeling little pain and having abundant energy. But a month later, that streak was ending and after a week of troublesome back pain, Anne decided to see a doctor, as she feared she was having another episode of kidney stones as she had had in the past. After an initial visit, her doctor thought that gallstones were more likely and ordered tests.

The results of those tests were far more sinister: pancreatic cancer. Her prognosis was not hopeful, and as a result she chose to forego aggressive chemotherapy. Within a month of her diagnosis, she disclosed to her sons that she was experiencing internal bleeding, and they urged her to go to the hospital immediately. When she arrived, she was rushed into emergency surgery to remove the area of the pancreas with

cancer cells. The medical team let her know that the surgery would be long and also risky, and that before receiving anesthetics she should make sure her loved ones were aware of her situation. With a fading glimmer of hope, Anne agreed. Her operation lasted over ten hours, according to Mary, who waited anxiously in the waiting room.

Anne awoke the following morning. The good news was that the cancerous tumors on her pancreas had been removed. The bad news was that the cancer had spread to her stomach and other areas, and Anne likely had a year or less to live, with the possibility of extending her time if she approved



aggressive chemotherapy. Consistent with her prior convictions, Anne decided to forego this treatment once again and to live the rest of her life as freely and with as much dignity as she could.

Initially, it seemed she was destined for pain no matter her

decision. She had a difficult time eating and was suffering from infections. But by summer her condition was improving, and she even wanted to return to work cleaning houses for her longtime clients. It was advised, however, that she spend her time in relaxation and not strain herself. As summer waned, her health issues resurfaced. Her energy was low, she had no appetite, and she was not able to keep down what she did eat. Rapidly she began to lose weight, and by summer's end she was thin and gaunt, though retained her kind eyes. Family events were set. Ed flew down from Alberta to spend some time with his mother. Anne was able to enjoy a midsummer cookout at Terry's house with all three of her sons and her grandchildren. There, Terry and John sang and played music for their mother, including her favorite hymns, which she had enjoyed for decades.

Anne was proactive in dealing with her affairs, selling her home and possessions well in advance of her death and dividing the proceeds among her three sons. In response to selling her home, one of Anne's most long-standing clients allowed Anne to live in his summer cottage in nearby Port

Stanley to provide an idyllic home for her beside the beach. By the end of summer, another gathering was set, during which her siblings Mary, Bill, John and Cathy came and spent time with her at this lakeside cottage. Anne was reunited with Neil, and



Neil served as one of Anne's caregivers till the end of her life. He cooked her meals, washed her, and stayed by her bedside through difficult nights. Anne spent much of her waking hours in prayer and meditation, and reading scripture and spiritual texts.

She preferred to not have many

outside guests outside of her sons and her sister Mary. Many days they would drop by her cottage and spend time chatting and reminiscing. Throughout the entire ordeal, Anne was graceful and composed, always keeping an upbeat attitude and never complaining. Indeed, her nurses commented that she was a wonderful patient to work with, though in order to properly

help her she needed to tell them when she was experiencing pain, which she often kept to herself.

In her final days, Anne's personality shone through. As she lay in bed, weak and withered, she experienced episodes of delirium, which expressed her desire to continue serving those she cared for. She discussed plans for a grand party she had planned, describing the meal she was going to prepare and the desserts she would bake. She asked her sister Mary if she would go shopping for items that she would cook herself, always insisting Mary take her credit card to cover costs. Soon, though, her high levels of energy began dropping, and Anne spent only a few moments with her eyes open each day, though when she did open them she would smile weakly at those around her. She soon slipped into a peaceful coma. On January 6, 2017, in the presence of Neil, John, Terry, Mary, and Mary's husband Peter, she died.

As per Anne's wishes, she had a small funeral of about fifty close friends and family at a local funeral home. Terry was able to handle the bulk of the logistical work that surrounds the death of a loved one. Anne was buried beside her sister Betty in

Aylmer. During the funeral, her sons John and Terry performed a duet of Anne's favorite hymn, "God on the Mountain." Its refrain is as follows:

For the God on the mountain, is still God in the valley

When things go wrong, He'll make them right

And the God of the good times, is still God in the bad times

The God of the day, is still God in the night

Family

Anne was born to John and Elizabeth Teichroeb. She was one of nine children.

Betty was the eldest child, born in 1951, and as a result suffered the most as a result of her parents' poverty. She had a difficult childhood and married her first husband Abe at a young age in Mexico before the two divorced. She eventually moved to northwestern Ontario, where she had an unclear number of common-law relationships before entering into a long-term relationship with Vlade Ross, subsequently changing her legal name to Jaqueline Ross. She owned and managed a care home in northwestern Ontario, but was soon diagnosed with bipolar disorder, divorced from Vlade, and moved back to southern Ontario. She worked as a live-in resident at a care home in St Thomas before dying in 2014 from overmedication at the age of 63.

Rick was John and Elizabeth's first son. He also had a difficult childhood, and his life as a young adult was characterized by having a troublesome attitude, running into issues with the law and eventually spending time in prison after

a failed bank robbery attempt. After reforming during his time in prison, Rick eventually settled down near Winkler, Manitoba with his wife Elizabeth, working in factories and in general trades and maintenance. He died in 2013 from colon cancer.

Bill was the family's third child, born in 1954. Bill was married to his wife Anne, but had difficulty maintaining stable employment while married. After having four children, he was divorced from his wife, living for some years in Manitoba before making his way to southern Ontario. Here Bill primarily lived a transient lifestyle, but did live in St Thomas at a fixed address for about ten years. At the time of this writing, Bill remains without a fixed address in the St Thomas area.

Sarah was the family's fifth child, born after Anne. She was born in 1957 and died in infancy soon after in 1958, in Saskatoon.

Pete was the family's sixth child, born in 1958 in Saskatoon. Pete has lived in Lubbock, Texas his entire adult life, working as a transport driver. He married his first wife, Donna, having three children with her, before divorcing and having a number of relationships afterwards and fathering two

more children. He eventually settled down with his longtime partner Francis in Lubbock, with whom he lives now.

John was born in Manitoba in 1960, where he has also lived for the majority of his life. He married his first wife Nettie and had two children. He has worked his entire adult life at the same factory near Winkler, Manitoba. John was eventually divorced from Nettie and later married his current wife, Natalie. The two continue to live in Winkler.

Mary was born in 1964 in Manitoba and eventually settled in Leamington, Ontario after marrying her husband Peter. The two had six children, but one died in infancy. Mary has primarily been a homemaker, but worked several years at an apple orchard, as well as on her personal farm on her own property.

Cathy is the youngest child, and was born in Manitoba. Cathy settled down with her parents in Seminole, Texas, where she met and married her husband David. The two had three children and spent some years moving, farming in different southern States before eventually settling back in Seminole. Cathy has worked as a homemaker, and later as a housecleaner.



Anne and Neil's Family

John is Anne's firstborn child. He studied business administration in school, but soon after began a career in truck driving. Not long after his marriage to Agatha and having two children, Aylssa and Zachary, he felt called to enter the ministry. He spent time in British Columbia interning and training at a church there before being reassigned to a church in Toronto, Ontario. Soon after, John took up a career in flooring while remaining active in his faith community. Agatha has primarily worked as a homemaker, but has also worked as a house cleaner and painter. Alyssa is known to possess the closest likeness to her grandmother, and has a similar reserved but thoughtful personality. Zachary is a sporty and active teenager.

Terry is Anne's second and most social son. Terry went to school for music, where he met his wife Kimberly. The two had three children: Louisa, Oliver and Sophie. Terry has primarily worked in business. He began as a salesman, but at the time of writing was in the process of acquiring a business. Kimberly has worked with her children as well as her husband

producing children's music under the name VogelJoy. All three of Terry and Kimberly's children have skills in the arts, including music and acting, and enjoy performing both on stage and on film.

Ed is Anne's youngest son. Ed lived at home with his parents longer than his older brothers. He eventually married his wife Lisa and moved to Alberta, where he could live his desired quiet and simple lifestyle. Ed works on oil pipelines and spends much of his spare time going on hunting and fishing trips. Ed and Lisa decided not to have children.

Lastly, Neil lived in Mexico before meeting Anne. After the two married, Neil primarily worked in tobacco fields and factories during his adult life. He spent much of his spare time fishing with his sons. By the end of Anne's life, he was able to make peace with his ex-wife. He acknowledged and apologized for his shortcomings as a husband and cared for Anne during her final months. He took these lessons from his first marriage, and following Anne's death he met and married Margaret. The two live happily in Aylmer, Ontario.

Religion

Religion played a significant role in Anne's life from beginning to end. She was raised on traditional Mennonite doctrine and attempted to adhere to it, attending regular services at Old Colony churches wherever she was living. After marrying and settling in Aylmer, Anne and Neil attended the Church of God together until the end of their marriage. Anne read scriptures with some regularity and kept up with supplemental spiritual readings.

After her divorce, Anne no longer felt comfortable in her church due to the stigma attached to divorce in her church community. She felt cut off and had little sense of Christian fellowship, and thereafter went through what her son John described as a "rebellious phase." She no longer attended church and was not living with the same type of outward piety that characterized her married years.

During this time, John was involved in the process of becoming a pastor in British Columbia. As his faith evolved, it deviated from the church conference under which he was studying, and he was reassigned to a church in Toronto, not far

from his childhood home. To work through his evolving faith, he discussed his thoughts with his mother. John's faith was becoming less traditional, or as he described it, further removed from religion and more towards faith, forgiveness and salvation. Anne began to understand and appreciate John's description of Christian faith, and once she was diagnosed with cancer, she came to embrace it.

In her final year, her life revolved around her faith. She spent more time reading scripture and other spiritual readings. She listened to old hymns and other gospel music. Although she was never attached to another close-knit religious community, she took her faith more seriously than in any other period of her life. She told John during her final months that she felt God had led him to come back from British Columbia so that he might tell her about his faith and enhance her relationship with Jesus.

Legacy

Anne's son Ed described her personality with a written anecdote. He wrote that his mother raised chickens and turkeys on their farm in Mt Salem, and she had an unusually tender heart for the animals, especially for a farmer. She spent countless hours waiting beside an incubator, waiting for chicks to hatch so she could assist them. Sometimes they were born with deformities, such as bad feet that made them unable to walk. Standard procedure in most farms is to cull the deformed animals, as the cost and time involved in aiding them is often not worth the potential gain. Yet Anne spent much of her time crafting small cardboard walking shoes that she would tape to her birds in order to give them a chance to learn to walk and eventually survive. Not all of her attempts were successful and she would lament her losses, yet she always persisted during her years on the farm.

Anne's legacy is one of hard work, kindness, compassion, and perseverance. Anne did not live an easy life. From the moment she was born into an impoverished family, to living through a strained marriage, to being diagnosed with a

debilitating disease that would cut her life short, Anne had every reason to live life with a negative attitude. Yet she was the epitome of gentleness and tenderness. She was never one to raise her voice and was a loving mother and indulgent grandmother. She was completely selfless with all of her acts, especially when it came to those at a disadvantage.

Her legacy is also complicated at times. She brought attention to herself whether intentionally or not, and she was flattered by the attention she received from men. As her son John recalled, she certainly played a role in the discord within her marriage.

Yet her failed marriage was also the result of her wish to be free and independent. She was skilled in many areas, not least in trades, fixing, and tinkering. She was a modern woman in an old-fashioned environment. She wanted the opportunity to make a living for herself and pursue the things she enjoyed.

She was often solemn, soft-spoken, and private. Yet she always carried a positive energy with her wherever she was, no matter the situation she was in. Even in death she was upbeat and kind. “She showed us how to die gracefully,” Mary said.

Before setting out for the day, she would often exclaim to her loved ones, “Let’s do this!” When faced with adversity, she would often respond, “We’ll make it work.”

Yet despite her progressive attitude and sometimes complicated past, Anne was at heart a simple woman. She never became involved in politics and world news, and never let the events around her alter her moderate temperament. She read simple books such as the inspirational works of Janette Oak, and more often spent her downtime watching television programming related to renovations and home projects. Her main sources of happiness came from spending time with family – her sons and daughters-in-law, her grandchildren and her siblings. Mary stated that as Anne’s life drew to a close, she had only one regret. She had spent much of her life dieting and controlling her weight, staying away from the coffee and muffin she so often looked forward to when she came home from work. “If I had to go back and do one thing differently,” she told Mary, “for all the times I got home from work and stopped myself from having my coffee and muffin, and had a banana or apple instead, I would have had my coffee and muffin.”

