

Eugene V. Ivash

1925 - 2018

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July 24, 1925 – June 8, 2018

Eugene Vasily Ivash was born July 1925 in Windor, Ontario, Canada to Vasily and Sophia “Sonia” Ivash. Vasily was an officer in the Russian Army when the Russian Revolution began. He and Sonia, a teacher, lived in Vladivostok, in the Far East. After the Czar’s Army finally fell, Communist leaders created a list with Vasily’s name on it and asked him to report. Previous individuals on the “list” had disappeared, so Vasily and Sonia escaped to China. There they lived for several years, and lost their first child Galina in an accident. Vasily made his way to Yokohama, Japan and then to San Francisco. He and Sonia then settled in Windsor, where Eugene and his beloved sister, Claudia “Clara”, were born. When Gene was three, they moved to Detroit, bought a farm, and Vasily obtained work as an engineer for Ford Motor Company.

Gene recalled having an interest in science as early as age five. He was quite bright, skipping two grades in school, and he had a voracious appetite for knowledge and a keenly inquisitive nature. His mischievousness and sense of humor sometimes got him into trouble as a boy, such as when he thought it was fun to put his sister into his father’s car and released the brake, “driving” her down a steep hill. (They were both fine though the car didn’t fare as well).

When time for college came, Gene entered the engineering science program at the University of Michigan. He became a U.S. citizen at the age of 18 and was drafted. He entered the V12 naval officer program and completed his BS degree while in the program. After a short time with the U.S. Navy, the war ended and he entered graduate school. He was awarded his PhD in 1952 and joined the physics department at The University of Texas to provide theoretical support for the Accelerator Laboratory and the Center for Nuclear Studies. He also collaborated with groups at Oak Ridge, but soon realized that his conscience would not allow him to work on weaponry and that at heart he was a pacifist. He taught for several semesters at General Atomic in La Jolla, and in Berkeley, California. Gene took half-time retirement in 1987 and totally retired in 2002, marking a career of 50 years at the University of Texas.

While studying in Ann Arbor, Gene met and fell in love with an intelligent, artistic, and independent-minded student named Edna Alberta Russell. He married Edna in 1953, and they made their lives together from that point on, inseparable until Edna’s death in 2009. Gene and Edna traveled extensively, in part due to his strong interest in encouraging the development of physics education abroad. He lived and consulted in Bangkok in 1958-1959 at Chulalongkorn University and as a participant at the Summer Science Institute at the University of Baroda in India. Edna loved their travels and the time abroad brought them closer. Together they found common interests in learning about philosophies and spiritual practices in the East.

Gene and Edna had three children: Carol, Catherine, and Thomas. In addition to raising the children, Edna was an avid painter and reader. She earned a Master’s degree in psychology and worked as a social worker, among other occupations. Gene pursued interests which included piano, classical music, and meditation. They instilled deep-rooted interests and values in their children, as well as in their grandchildren Kevin, Alexandra, and Erik, whom they loved deeply.

Gene is most cherished and remembered for his deep love of God and for helping others along their spiritual paths. He was an early member of the Friends Meeting of Austin, serving as Clerk and working on a number of committees and concerns throughout the years. In the 1960s, Gene and Edna started following the path of Sant Mat (Teachings of the Saints), becoming vegetarians, living simply, and meditating daily in order to practice inward loving devotion. Gene served as a regional representative, instructing others about the path and meditation for many years.

Gene shared that “even now we have only had partial glimpses of what is a very fascinating, and still largely mysterious world!” He was known to quote Einstein: “Logic will get you from A to Z, but imagination will get you everywhere.”



