



Mr. Ansis Cimdins

November 19, 1942 - February 15, 2025

Memories From the Landlady

Fifteen years ago, on a hot summer day while working in the garden, I noticed one of my new tenants suddenly appear on the stairs. A formidable giant of a man measuring over 6' tall, dressed in black, wild white hair flowing in the gentle summer breeze – and looking quite like Albus Dumbledore....! Well, I thought to myself “so that’s what Latvians look like.” I had only seen his lovely wife Astrida during the lease signing. As that thought took shape, I was suddenly compelled to glance again - from the dandelions I was tending to - and have another peek at the tall gaunt wizard man coming down the stairs. I thought perhaps he might ask a question – And as the sun behind him in the west momentarily blinded me, I managed to adjust my vision in time to see the man before me with a yellow jacket bee affixed to his regal-looking forehead! I gasped and began to back away in fear. He said “I come in peace ...” I screamed there’s a yellow jacket bee on your forehead!! And he responded “Leave it alone. It’s resting.” And that was my first impression of the fearsome faced Ansis Cimdins – who I have come to know since then, along with his loving wife, Astrida, as two of the most gentlest souls I’ve ever met from the land of Latvia.

In time I learned that once upon a miserable time in Latvia, Ansis’ mother trekked 1,000 miles with her two boys, Ansis, an infant, and his older brother,

in order to escape political oppression. Up to that point in time, they had been wealthy and part of the Latvian upper class. All their possessions were confiscated and their father sent to Siberia to work in a coal mine. Aided by the Lutheran Church, they were eventually able to get to America where his mom, who had been a dentist, found work in a factory to support her children. Ansis and his brother had to be sent into rural areas – mostly farms in those days, which were sometimes miles away - so their mother could continue working as sole provider. Ansis never saw his father again. As Ansis and his brother grew older, they began to work on the fostering farms. It was then he grew to care for and love animals, which only heightened an awareness of their suffering. He vowed to be a vegetarian – a lifestyle from which he and Astrida never wavered.

Ansis served his country during the Vietnam war but never spoke about it. He met the love of his life, Astrida, and together they spent a lifetime caring for the lowliest - rescuing many sickly and terribly abused cats and dogs. Occasionally when I came to call, I would notice all those mean streets rescue cats and dogs playing happily while soothing classical music played in the background. Astrida would be patiently tending to an injured creature and Ansis would usually be quietly reading the NY Times. What baffled me was the calm ethereal atmosphere that always encapsulated them. I'd leave their home shaking my head in awe and thinking - what if they are actually two Leshis of Slavic folklore who have come to rescue in New York instead of a Latvian forest? Many crazy musings came about watching the two of them interact with animals. For instance, I caught Ansis "saving" my rabbits from what he called synthetically manufactured sugary feed that I had purchased. He tediously picked out all the bits he thought would be harmful. And while six or seven rescue dogs and a couple of dozen cats inhabited their world at any given time, you'd never hear a sound from their apartment causing many to believe there were no animals at all and that the apartment was simply vacant. Their animals had preternaturally long lives and good health. Yes – to

me Ansis and Astrida were a mystery. On another occasion, while musing about my tenants, I came across a story about another mysterious Latvian named Ed Leedskalnin, who somehow quietly built the mysterious Coral Castle in Florida, to this day quite the anomaly – Hmmm – I'll be forever wondering Lol

Well recently Ansis left us all to move on to a higher place – reluctantly so – as he would constantly apologize to his dear Astrida for “letting her down.” This would make her cry – and now I cry, as well – for it is rare to come across two magical people who keep you pondering the hills and valleys of this life – and the very fine and unique folks you meet along the way.

I will remember Ansis, in the throes of his wretched Alzheimers, when all the therapy and treatments would fail to calm him. I'd hear the tumult upstairs and I'd desperately try to help. The disease would cause him to scream in pain and anger and sometimes you could snap him out of it. He would like it when I would stand at the bedside and command “Pull yourself together soldier – you're scaring the troops!” And he'd laugh - and then he'd start talking - and the home attendants, Astrida and I would go along with whatever part of his life he was remembering – and we'd pretend we were there and knew all the people and places. And he'd suddenly say to me in such a kind voice: “I will never forget you...”. And I would go back home and cry.

During his awful battle with Alzheimer's, Ansis never stopped shouting “I want to go home!” And now dear Ansis you are “home” at peace and suffer no longer. I hope your creator gave you the same rest you gave that yellow jacket bee 15 years ago. Do not forget us brave warrior - for we shall never, ever forget you!

Until we meet again.....RIP

Cemetery Details

Greenwood Crematory

500 25th Street
Brooklyn, NY 11232

Events

Details are pending.