Loran J. (Larry) Popoff was born in the Popoff Village in the Doukhobor settlement of Christovoye (also known as Outlook or Hardy Mountain) near Grand Forks, BC, on January 3, 1944, the youngest of six sons in the family of John (Nikolayevich) and Polly (Pavlovna, nee Konkin) Popoff. A few years later, his younger sister Lillian was born, who was to be the only girl in the large family.

In the early 1950s, the Sons of Freedom Doukhobor community made a group decision to withdraw their children from the public school system. They felt that the government schools were assimilating their children away from their own Russian-based culture and ingraining concepts such as nationalism and militarism, which were against their beliefs. Although the people had set up their own Russian-language classes for basic schooling, these were not recognized by the authorities, who implemented a harsh policy of abducting the children away from their families and confining them at a Special Residential School in New Denver, BC.

Larry and his younger sister Lillian were taken to New Denver in 1953 and spent the next several years there, being allowed visits with their parents and family only once every two weeks, through a chain link fence. This “New Denver Episode” of the 1950s had a profound effect on all those involved and the children in particular experienced varying degrees of trauma. Larry took it harder than some - he’d been a bright pupil who liked school and was unhappy with being withdrawn, even running away from home and secretly attending classes, to the dismay of his parents. Then, when the police came and took him and his sister to the Residential School, this was an even bigger insult to his free-spirited nature and sense of justice.

His childhood ordeal affected Larry deeply and he retained a life-long bitterness towards all those he considered to be responsible, and felt that this setback was connected to the many “downs and outs” of his life. Otherwise, in his day-to-day lifestyle, he tended to distance himself from his past. However, in 1999 the BC Ombudsman released a Report stating that the New Denver episode had violated the children's human rights and that the BC government had made a mistake and should offer the New Denver survivors an apology and compensation. When the BC government ignored the Report, a large number of the survivors took the matter to court, with the donated help of a prominent Vancouver law firm. Larry quite enthusiastically joined in, saying that maybe he’d at least live long enough to hear somebody say they
were sorry. But that was not to be...

Upon his return to Grand Forks from New Denver, with his education cut short at 15, Larry worked on local farms and at various other jobs, but within a few years he moved up to Williams Lake, BC, where most of his brothers lived at the time. A quick learner and capable worker, he found employment as a mechanic, and at various other jobs there and in other towns of Northern BC. In Williams Lake he met Jeannine Laverdiere and they were married in 1964. Their daughter, Michelle Lillian was born in 1966, and a few years later they moved to Terrace, BC, where their younger daughter, Lange Lorann was born in 1970.

Not too long after, however, the marriage broke up. By this time, following in the footsteps of his older brother Cecil, Larry had become a skilled and versatile carpenter, and he continued to make his living in that trade for the remainder of his working life. Although his home base continued to be in Terrace, he worked in various locations throughout BC, and even spent a couple of stints of a year or less back in his home-town of Grand Forks. In 1982 he married Diane (Aldrich) Wagner in Terrace, and their son, Joel Christopher, was born in 1983. Within a few years that marriage also broke up and Larry spent the rest of his life as a single man, continuing to live in Terrace.

Although single he was never alone. He had one of those charming personalities that attracted people wherever he went - a true “people magnet”, he always had many loyal friends among both men and women. With his exceptional musical talent and performing flair, he was the life of the party at any gathering. Rarely too far away from his guitar, he played with several different bands over the years. Part of a musically gifted family, Larry often sang with his siblings, including his sister Lillian, but the duet performances with his brother Cecil produced such outstanding harmonies that they were sometimes referred to as the second Louvin Brothers (popular country stars of the 50s), and they could just as easily do amazingly authentic covers of the Everly Brothers and many other singing stars over the years.

For several years in the 1960s, Larry and Cecil performed throughout the Cariboo region of BC, together with their older brother Pete, in the Williams Lake Starlighters Band that Pete had formed earlier. Sometimes they went further afield and even had a few brushes with fame and fortune. Once, while traveling to the USA with some friends, Larry was casually singing with his guitar at a hotel lounge in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, when he was approached by a stranger who suggested he should be singing professionally. Larry explained that he had had no formal training and was not really good enough to do that. The man introduced himself, “My name is Sonny James and I’d like to take you with me to Nashville. Don't worry about the training - we've got schools for that - I can see you have the talent...” Larry was dumbfounded, not expecting such an encounter in that location, he hadn't recognized the famous Country star. On another occasion Larry and Cecil were performing in Ft. St. John, BC, and were approached by a member of a musical entourage traveling with famous Country singer, Ray Price, who also invited them to come to Nashville for auditions. Again, there seemed to be reasons why they could not take up the offer. In later years, they sometimes regretted not following through on these opportunities, but nevertheless were able to look back on many enjoyable performing experiences from their younger days. Even as his voice deteriorated from ill
health, Larry continued to sing and could always put on an entertaining show to the delight of all.

In recent years, despite declining health, Larry spent some time helping his daughter Michelle and her husband build their new home on the Sunshine Coast. In turn, Michelle was devoted in standing by him through many months of surgery and hospitalization in Vancouver. However, despite numerous medical interventions over a period of several years, his health eventually succumbed, and he passed away at the Terrace Hospital on November 17, 2013, at the age of 69. His brothers, Nick and Cecil, and his sister Lillian were in loving attendance at his bedside. His two daughters, Michelle and Lange had also come from afar to visit with him earlier.

Throughout his illness, Larry was surrounded by a lovingly supportive group of long-time friends and neighbours, who helped the family to arrange a very well attended Celebration of Life, which took place at the Happy Gang Center in Terrace at 3:00 PM, Tuesday, November 19, 2013.

Larry was predeceased by his older brother Paul, who died in infancy in 1929, his father John in 1973, his mother Polly in 1983, his eldest brother John, in 1986, and his second oldest brother, Pete, in 2010.

He is survived by daughters: Michelle Landry (with husband Joel, and their children, Jace, Sean and Jamie), in Sechelt, BC, and Lange Popoff (with daughter Marissa Lori Morowski ) in Penticton, BC; his son, Joel Popoff in Vancouver, and step-daughter Pam Aldrich Kapalka and her family in Rimbey, Alberta. He also leaves behind his brothers: Nick (Arlene) Popov of Kelowna, BC, and Cecil (Eileen) Popoff of Quesnel, BC; sister Lillian (Jim) Popoff, of Grand Forks, BC; sister-in-law Colleen in Victoria, BC, and many nieces and nephews who will cherish him always, and numerous other relatives and friends.

Larry will remain forever in the hearts of all who loved him. May he rest in peace.