Violet Margaretha Sawatsky (nee Hiebert)



DECEMBER 7, 2024

Voilet Margaretha Hiebert was born on March 5, 1930 in Killarney, Manitoba. She was predeceased by her husband Bill and daughter Cathy, her parents Johann and Aganetha Hiebert (nee Penner) and 9 siblings, 1 of which was a twin, 4 of which, she never knew. They were 4 girls … 3 of them died in infancy in Russia and the other died in a Polish prison during the flight the Hiebert's took to escape the Revolution.

Voilet married Bill Sawatsky on December 6, 1952 in West Abbotsford Mennonite Church. They had six children: Rick and wife Sandi and son Phillip; Cathy and son Chris; Dave and wife Pat and their children Michael, Colin and Carl; Peter and wife Susan and their children Trevor, Cameron and Amanda; John and Janet and children John-Taylor, Steven and Brennan; and Lorie and husband Kevin and their children Jillian and Kristen Quail.

Growing up Mom enjoyed Field Day or Sports Day which was the one day a year when Mom and her siblings were given a quarter to spend on candy. "We licked the cone slowly to make it last!" Don't ask Mom to play baseball, she hated it. "Always chosen last!"

Mr Sawchuk, her school teacher was strict, but good. Mom's twin brother Vic hadn't done his homework and was strapped in front of the class. He cried and so did Mom.

A childhood friend was Nettie Wiebe. Mom played dolls by the hour with her. Mom had a rattan-like woven doll carriage .. a unique and popular toy among her friends. At 15 when Mom moved, the carriage sold for a dollar at the farm auction.

Mom said "We were poor, but never felt poor'. Mom said during WW2 local neighbors considered putting men under the trestles to spy on German children. They wanted to make sure the kids didn't try to blow it up. Mom and her friends were called "Nazis!" by some, mainly English people.

Mom's family moved from Killarney to Fork River in 1932. Then to Winnipeg in 1933, then back to Fork River in 1934. Finally, one more Manitoba move to Starbuck ..and then in 1945 the Hiebert's moved west to a farm on Ross Road in Abbotsford.

Mom attended a grade 1 to 12 school in Fork River, Manitoba. Mom had to walk 2 and a half miles … From there she was met by a car, in good weather … or in winter by a horse-driven covered vehicle .. and then was driven a further 2 and a half miles. Mom's first teacher was Miss White. A memory from 1939 when Mom was 9 .. she participated in a parade through town honouring King George and Queen Victoria.

Before marriage, Mom worked doing housework for different families in West Vancouver. At this stage Mom started dating Dad. Mom's paid working career finished with working off and on at our Tante Hani's Bakery, after getting married.

Mom and Dad's first home was in a cabin, much like a motel, for 6 weeks in Abbotsford. Similar to many stops in Manitoba, Mom and Dad lived in many homes throughout the Greater Vancouver area. They included living in what Mom called "the nicest apartment ever!" at 48th and Fraser. For those of us in our senior years there was a very famous commercial jingle often heard on CKNW … "Honest Nate's Department store … 48th and Fraser!" After one and a half years there, Mom and Dad finally bought their first home on Victoria Drive in Vancouver.

Some of Mom's hobbies included knitting … "it was something you learned before you went to school" and keeping a diary, which Mom faithfully had done since 1945. Mom loved her devotions in the morning and at night and enjoyed volunteering at the Community Centre and with MCC. Mom was an avid reader of the daily newspaper and clean romance novels.

Mom's heroes were her parents. She was especially close to her Mom, her Dad was more of a disciplinarian.

When it comes to music, a younger Mom was like all other girls and loved Sinatra. Of course, later Mom turned to classical music like Beethoven, Mozart and Rossini overtures. Choirs and hymns also gladden Mom's heart.

Sports ? What else ? HOCKEY ! Mom had fond memories of Foster Hewitt on the radio. Mom would walk to the neighbors and listen to Hockey Night in Canada. Her favorite team, before Vancouver's entry into the NHL in 1970 was Toronto, captained by Syl Apps. Mom also mentioned Gordie Howe.

Mom shared Dave's favorite movie … "The Sound of Music". Favorite actor … Clark Gable. On TV it was "I Love Lucy" and "Love of Life" "before the stories got so filthy!"

Mom's favorite foods … noodles, sweets and baked goods. Mom was loved by all for those countless "faspas" on Sundays when her baked goods and noodles were semi-famous.

Mom's favorite holidays included the first trip to California with our family and a Canada-wide trip with Dad.

Favorite Bible passages: 1st Corinthians 13 (the Love Chapter) and Romans.

Mom's most important decisions ever made were becoming a Christian and marrying Dad.

Messages of Condolence

I send my sincere condolences during this time of deep sorrow. The Bible gives the comforting hope that your loved one will come to life again on a peaceful paradise earth when death will be no more in John 5:28, 29 and Acts 24:15.

— Gail Floyd

Our condolences go out to Aunt Vi’s family. Your mom was one of my favourites. She was always kind and had a love for people. I can still hear her voice. Going to Abbotsford to see the relatives was a highlight in my life.

— Henry & Lois Fehr

Vi was a special lady. She always treated me kindly and had great stories. She will be greatly missed!

— Jennifer

A tribute to my aunt Vi

Elaine and I had the good fortune to see aunt Vi one last time three years ago on our way to see Dave and Erin on the island. She was in the care home by then with either dementia or alzheimers-never have figured out what the difference is. In spite of her illness the old aunt Vi I knew and loved shone through. She was still her cheerful, animated self. She still recognized me and every ten minutes exclaimed in that dramatic way she had "Leonard, is it actually you?" followed by the familiar "Houston, we have a problem". It brought back memories of how she and uncle Bill welcomed us into their home on our family visits to BC. Years later when I was travelling on my own the welcome mat was still out. The summer I turned fifteen I stayed in Surrey for three weeks while Rick and I picked strawberries for pocket money. I never left the table hungry. In my late teens and early twenties hitchhiking days she and my other Sawatsky aunts always gave me bed and board when I came through and dropped in unannounced. I sometimes wonder what they thought of their vagabond nephew who looked more like something that just fell off a freight train than a respectable Mennonite lad. Dear uncle Garry succinctly put it this way " The only charity I support is the Sally Ann because the look after bums like you"

Alan Jackson's song "working class heroes" honours ordinary every day people like our parents and aunts and uncle who never achieved fame in the eyes of the world but who lived solid, honest, hard working lives, supporting their families and contributing to their community leaving us with a legacy no amount of money can match.

Aunt Vi was a working class hero. Thanks, auntie.

Nephew Len

— Len Friesen

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https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/sawatsky-nee-hiebert-violet-margaretha

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