Irene Freta Swift

FEBRUARY 23, 2020

Our Mother, Grandmother, Great-Grandmother and Great-Great-Grandmother passed during the morning of Sunday, February 23, 2020 at the age of 102 years.

Freta, as her family called her, was born in her parents' home, a white house her father built on a hill in southwestern Saskatchewan in an area near Val Marie and Cadillac. Her mother always told us that Mom/Freta was 1 ½ pounds at birth and that they kept her alive in a "butter box" on the oven door.

Freta was the only child of Alfred Ernest Bland and Bessie Mode Newton Bland. Her parents were early settlers in that area. Her mother, Bessie, called Freta "Babe" as long as Bessie was alive.

Her mother, Bessie, had proved up her brother's homestead and then bought it from him for a nominal amount in about 1911 in an area near Val Marie called Hillandale. Grandma Bland was a woman ahead of her time. Grandma Bland was a member of a family who had lived in Ontario near Van Kleek Hill and L'Orignal and had been in Canada so long that Bessie and her sister, Henrietta (Nettie) Newton Grant, disputed about whether they were of Scot descent or Irish descent.

Her father, Ernest, was born in Ontario. Ernest and his family lived in Ontario near Coburg and followed new opportunities in Manitoba and then Saskatchewan near Swift Current. We are not sure how it was that he homesteaded in the Val Marie

area.

While Freta was an only child, she cherished her Grant cousins and her cousins on her father's side that lived near Swift Current.

Freta started school in a French Convent School in a small community named Frenchville. Her parents gave her a pony to ride the miles between her home and school. She must have been so brave to go off by herself in all sorts of weather to attend school in a new language.

She had a lifetime friendship with two families that farmed nearby, the Nordwick family from Norway and the Klatt family.

Freta eventually went to school in Cadillac and boarded with friends of the family. Some years she only got schooling by correspondence. Eventually, she went to Moose Jaw to attend Normal School.

Freta taught in many one room school houses in southwestern Saskatchewan during the late thirties and the forties and also, during World War 2 she taught in Lemburg and Stoughton, so far from her family.

Freta met her husband, our father, Everett Donald (ED) Swift, while teaching at Alfalfa Valley School south of Vidora, SK. They waited to marry until after ED returned after serving in the army during the war. They married in Eastend, SK. The United Church minister was playing ball in a tournament that day so they were married between games.

They moved to Regina. Freta taught at Kitchener School until she was expecting their first child. Freta remained an "at home" mother until after the arrival of their fourth child when she began substitute teaching with the Regina Public School Board. Freta made artificial flowers, sewed clothing for her children, taught Sunday School and attended UCW during her "at home" years.

After the arrival of their fifth child, Freta returned to teaching in one room school houses out of Regina. She lived in a trailer that Freta and ED owned, sometimes in school yards and sometimes in farm yards. Her mother, Bessie, who was at that time was in her late 70’s, lived with our family in Regina and assisted ED with the care of the children. Bessie passed away in 1970 at the age of 89 and had lived with Freta and ED for 14 years helping with their family.

Freta taught in Dysart, Cupar, Lipton and Leross in the sixties and early seventies. She was a patient teacher and worked for many of those years with children who needed special assistance. She discovered in 1973, when she planned to retire, that one of the schools that she had taught at in the 30’s had not submitted her pension contributions. Freta then had to work one more year and taught at Tribune, SK for that year.

Freta then provided childcare for her grandchildren while her children worked. She also provided childcare for families in their community. Her grandchildren have many warm and humorous memories of those years.

Freta remained in her home on Empress Street living on her own until 2014 when her family felt that for her safety, she needed to be in a care home. She was lovingly and carefully cared for by Helping Hands Personal Care Home until her last breath. Our family is truly thankful for their care.

Freta and ED had a lifelong love of nature, having been raised on the Saskatchewan prairies. They took us camping, fishing, hunting, picking berries and wandering through the prairie looking at the grasses and flowers. We also travelled in the United States and provinces of Canada. All of their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren appreciate the world they live in because of their teaching.

Freta always felt that adults should remember that they are the giants in the world of children and should treat the children kindly and fairly. She also felt that “there are many ways of being in the world” so all should be accepted. She would say that a child not behaving may be “just teasing” and then let them know what they should be doing.

While Freta was a very shy person, she was always interested and concerned about those around her.

Freta was predeceased by her husband ED in 1995; her parents Bessie and Ernest; and her son Charles (Charlie) in 2011. She is survived by her daughters Reta and Shirley; her sons James (Jim) and Barry; her son-in-law Art; her daughters-in-law Sharon, Laurie and Lyn. She also leaves behind twelve grandchildren Dawn, Jason (Jill), Kelly (Natalie), Danielle, Erin (Pekka), Sean, Jenna, Dylan, Aubrey (Conor), Evan, Lane and Adam (Deanne); nine great-grandchildren Kara, Kaitlyn (Brad), Brooklynn (Chase), Zachery, Jacob, Chloe, Aila, Elsi and Noel; three great-great-grandchildren Sawyer, Ledger and baby Cullen.

A private graveside service will be held. Interment in Regina Memorial Gardens.

Messages of Condolence

Our deepest condolences to the Swift families on the loss of your Mother, Grandmother, Great Grandmother and Great Great Grandmother.

Your Mother

Although you cannot hear her voice
or see her smile no more,
your mother walks beside you still
just as she did before.
She listens to your stories and
she wipes away your tears;
she wraps her arms around you
and she understands your fears.

It’s just she isn’t visible
to see with human eye,
but talk to her in silence and
her spirit will reply.
You’ll feel the love she has for you –
you’ll hear her in your heart;
she’s left her human body but
your souls will never part.

— Darlene & Marty Krauss

This kind lady was one of my teachers in Dysart in about 1964. She kindly gave me a ride to Regina on weekends to watch the Regina Pats hockey games.
May she Rest In Peace.

— Pat Zatylny

I'm so sorry for your loss. I feel privileged to have met ED and Freta many years ago. I remember them as being open, warm and welcoming. As a great great granddaughter of Nettie Grant, Freta was a connection to a generation who survived and thrived in the area I call home (then and now). May you feel the comfort of our Lord as you grieve.

— Amy (Grant) Andree

My sincere condolences to all of the Swift family; with special reference to Reta and Art. You have always been and continue to be special people in the lives of myself and of my family. Thank you. It is always sad to say goodbye. However, in death, Grandma Swift now journeys into new beginnings. Enjoy the many memories!

— Dave Rist

We extend our sincere condolences to the Swift family.

— Deb (nee Kreis) and Cam Pelzer

My heartfelt condolences to the Swift and Poulton families... you lost a great woman, yet your memories of her will keep her close to you. She was a great teacher to your families and was there to guide you to become the persons you are now. In her 102 years - it's hard to imagine the progress she saw it's just mind boggling. I believe it was in 1981 that I saw the child come out in her when we visited Disneyland and were on Tom Sayers Island walking across the barrel bridge - what was written on her face was pure joy. It is that reminds me of her - her inner child --- She may no longer be with us - yet she's still close to our hearts. To all of you know that life is way too short for most of us - so live life to the fullest.

— Achim Hupka

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https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/swift-irene-freta

Printed on October 9, 2026