



REMEMBERING
Martha Stobbe

March 26, 1929 - May 6, 2022



Martha was born to Jacob and Maria Sawatzky on March 26, 1929 in Belmont, Manitoba, the third of eight children. Raising a family in the harsh conditions of the prairies was very challenging, particularly in the 1930s, but Martha's parents were resilient and resourceful as they provided for their growing family. Martha enjoyed telling stories from her childhood, and some of these illustrated her adventurous and curious nature.

One story recounts an unexpected ride on the side of a pickup truck. Her father operated a general store and needed to drive to Winkler to get supplies. Very often, one or two children would go with him, but this time he needed to go alone. Not to be deterred, as soon as their dad got in his pickup, John, Jake, and Martha scampered to the passenger's side and quietly sat on the running board. As the vehicle pulled away, John jumped off, then Jake, but Martha froze, holding tightly to the spare tire mounted on the side. Her dad was singing away in the noisy truck, wondering why the farmers in the fields were extra friendly that day with their frantic waving. Eventually he pulled over, shocked to find a shivering Martha clinging to the side of the truck.

Several years later Martha went on another ride, this time on an airplane. Just after Canada entered World War II, some of the young men had to enlist and were learning how to fly. During Sports Day, one of the pilots circled the school's playground a few times and landed across the road. The pilot gave a few rides to the older boys, one at a time because of weight restrictions, charging \$1 per ride. Martha had only 50 cents and asked for a ride, but he insisted on \$1. She told him that her friend wanted to come, too, but he said he didn't have room for two passengers. Martha explained that they were little girls, and he could easily seat them both for \$1. Her persistence paid off, and up they went. The pilot asked where

they lived and circled low over Martha's house until her mother came out, stunned to see her daughter waving from the open window of the plane.

As a child, Martha considered herself a "middle child" who wasn't old enough to help with the younger children, so she liked to "help" her dad serve customers in the store. He would let her stand on a box beside the cash register and watch quietly until the customers were gone. Curious about the exchange of money taking place, her father would patiently explain why he gave money back to people after they had given some to him. Many years later Martha would comment that the handling of money was involved in most of the jobs she held during her life.

Church attendance was a regular part of Martha's upbringing, and when she was a young teen, a missionary on furlough came to Elm Creek, Manitoba to teach VBS. That's when Martha accepted Jesus as her Lord and Saviour. She was baptized in the Assiniboine River a few years later, at age 16. Martha was able to go to Gimli Bible Camp one summer when she met the challenge of memorizing 100 verses in exchange for the camp fees.

Martha's family had moved several times within the province before settling in Elm Creek, where Martha received most of her formal schooling. She loved attending school there and would have graduated from Grade 12 had her family not moved to BC when she was 17 years old. It was unclear where she fit in the BC school system, and she estimated she finished her formal education at a Grade 11 level. Her family lived in Sardis for 3 years before settling in Abbotsford on Huntingdon Road.

When Martha was living and working in Vancouver as a young adult, she would occasionally go home to Abbotsford on the weekends. It was while attending church with her parents that she noticed a handsome man singing in the choir. She especially liked his smile, and somehow her eyes would always go to him. Irvin was attracted to her as well, and they were able to spend time together after she moved back to Abbotsford to work.

Martha loved to roller skate, and that ability was high on her list of requirements for a boyfriend. After she met Irvin, however, it didn't matter so much anymore. He could not roller skate, fell down when he tried, and declared that it was too dangerous as he needed to have a job! After a short courtship, Irvin and Martha were married on September 26, 1953 in the South Abbotsford MB Church. They were one of the last couples to be married in the little church on Gladwin Road next to South Poplar Elementary.

Four children were added to their family - Barbara in 1954, Ray in 1958, Norm in 1960 and Marilynne in 1961. Martha was busy at home with very full hands, as Irvin worked long hours. She also babysat regularly and volunteered with Meals on Wheels. An annual family vacation was a must, however, and they trekked to many places including Yellowstone, California, the Canadian prairies, the Okanagan, and northern BC. This vacation was especially appreciated after a month of picking raspberries in the hot July sun.

When their youngest child was a teenager, Martha started working outside the home again. She was employed by various drug stores over the years and enjoyed meeting the public and developing relationships with her co-workers. After

retirement, she volunteered regularly as a cashier at the local MCC.

Martha had a quiet but strong faith. She and Irvin made sure their family was involved in the church with the children attending Sunday School, VBS, Pioneer Girls, Boys Brigade, and youth groups. She served in numerous capacities at Central Heights and enjoyed teaching Sunday School, helping assemble bulletins, and volunteering in the library and kitchen. As long as she was able, Martha was faithful to attend services and be part of a home Bible study group.

Martha was very creative and resourceful. She sewed and knit clothes for her children, and later in life she took lessons to learn how to crochet. She gave most of her afghans to her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Many of her newborn great-grandchildren went home from the hospital in one of her crocheted baby blankets. Martha was also creative in the kitchen. Out of necessity she learned how to make little go far. Years later she loved hosting guests, setting a beautiful table, and providing delicious food. Cabbage rolls, Russian chicken, borscht, salmon quiche, homemade buns, and a variety of sweet treats like butter tarts were among her specialities.

After Irvin and Martha retired, they loved to travel. Yearly trips were made to visit children and grandchildren scattered across the continent. Saskatchewan, Ontario, and Montana were on the route. They also ventured to Alaska, eastern Canada, and various parts of the USA. They would have continued their adventures had Irvin not passed away in 1998 at the age of 72.

Martha bravely faced life as a widow - learning how to take care of the car, deal with insurance, and drive herself everywhere. She continued to travel to see her children and grandchildren, but now by train and plane. She did travel for pleasure on occasion, but it just wasn't the same without Irvin.

Martha passed away May 6, 2022. And, although we grieve, we rejoice that her suffering is over, and she is with her Lord and Saviour. A favourite Scripture of Martha's was Isaiah 41:10: "Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you. I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."

Martha is survived by her children Barbara (Bruce) Bruckner, Ray (Pauline) Stobbe, Norm (Lisa) Stobbe, and Marilynne (Vern) Heinrichs, along with 11 grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren, siblings Lillian, George, Bert, and Alfred, and many nieces and nephews. Martha was predeceased by her husband Irvin, her parents Jacob & Maria, and siblings John, Jake, and Hilda.

