

SUSAN GIESBRECHT

1914-2009

Susan (nee Friesen) Giesbrecht, wife of the late Isaac Giesbrecht, passed away on Saturday January 17, 2009 at the George Boyack Care Home in Calgary Alberta in her 95th year after a brief illness of three months. She is survived by her son Edward (Betty Daly) of Calgary, sister Eva Fehr of Morden Manitoba, brother John of Winkler Manitoba and numerous nephews and nieces. She was predeceased by Isaac her husband of 64 years in September 2001, her parents Abram and Susannah , sisters Maria Warkentin, Anna Warkentin, Helen Friesen, and Nettie Dyck, and brothers Henry, Abram, Diedrich, and William.

Susan was born October 4, 1914 at Gouldtown Saskatchewan to Abram and Susannah (nee Friesen) Friesen, the fifth of eleven children. When she was about six year of age her family moved to Halbstad Manitoba. Here, and in several other communities of southern Manitoba is where she spent her childhood and youth and received a grade school education. While she spent much of her early youth assisting her parents on the farm and attending to an ailing younger sister, she did go to work in Winnipeg with her older sister Maria in the latter years prior to her marriage. It was during this time, when she was twenty one, that the picture you see displayed was taken and a beautiful young lady she was!

On October 29, 1937 she was married to Isaac Giesbrecht, a local farm boy. They continued working on the farm for and/or farming with Isaac's parents and working as a farm laborer for other farmers. The following years were not easy for them, and particularly for Susan, Their accommodation was far from acceptable, even in those years, and the working relationship difficult. This prompted a decision in 1956 to leave the area and Manitoba to make a fresh start in Alberta.

The move to Alberta was a new beginning for them not only as it pertained to the means of a livelihood. It was in 1958 they became the parents of their chosen son Edward who brought new meaning and purpose into their lives. Ed was the pride and joy of their life. As they cared for him in his early years, he cared for them in their latter years. With his father's failing health in the late 1900's/early 2000's trips to Red Deer to give care and support were frequent. With Isaac's passing in September 2001, care for his Mother did not diminish. It was with his encouragement she sold her home in Red Deer and moved to Calgary in 2002 and resided at Westbourne Place, a senior's facility, where she would not have the responsibility of a property and where Ed and Betty could give her the care

and attention she required and would require in her aging years. This they did faithfully, and well, for the remaining years of Susan's life.

In Alberta they worked at various jobs and businesses which included work as a heavy equipment operator/owner for Isaac, operating gas stations and restaurants, a stint at farming, and apartment managers. Their work took them to various communities across the province from Bassano in the south, to Central Alberta, to Vilna, and other points north. Susan was a hard worker and the full responsibility of the restaurant operations, and on occasions pumping gas, fell on her. Her culinary skills were applied at construction and oilfield camps as well, which she preferred, with no task being insurmountable. To supplement the family income in the early to mid 1960's Susan took to raising rabbits for which there was a good demand in the Calgary market. During these years raising Chinchillas for their fur became popular too, so this was another venture she undertook.

In addition to working outside of the home much of her life and being a homemaker and mother, Susan took time for gardening and to apply her skills to sewing, knitting, quilting, crocheting, and embroidering which she enjoyed even in the early years after moving to Calgary. The majority of her patch work quilts were hand sewn with great detail and care regardless of the size or shapes of the squares she chose to blend into the planned design. Examples of her work are the quilt she made for Betty, one of many she made but not the most detailed, and the embroidered picture of a peacock that always adorned a wall in her homes.

Susan was a good hostess and her culinary skills were applied equally well in her home for the benefit of the family and in the entertainment of guests. She was noted for her pies and the hearty meals she would serve to her guests whether they came from near or afar. She looked after her family and herself well. When living at Westbourne Place she could have availed herself of good home cooked meals prepared by her niece Anne who was on kitchen staff. However, she preferred her own cooking as long as she was able. Perhaps her motto was "It is always best when you cook it yourself".

As already mentioned Susan was a hard and determined worker and not only did she undertake projects which we would classify as those pertaining to the feminist gender. Renovation and construction projects were likewise undertaken with zest and determination in many of the homes they moved into. These were not only carried out in their younger years but even after retiring from the working force at not so young an age. Upon their retirement they purchased a property with only the shell of a house. They completed it and did a major cleanup of the property. This was not an uncommon practice for them with projects generally being renovations to homes acquired.

People were an important part of Susan's life and she made friends readily wherever she lived. Her church and the people there were very important to her as they often were the subject of her conversations. In the years before their strength and health started to deteriorate they would not miss the annual church conferences or festivities if they were within a reasonable driving distance and it was at all possible for them to attend. Even in the years since coming to Calgary she liked to attend church on a regular basis until recently when it was more difficult for her to maneuver.

(While on this subject, I believe it to be appropriate to acknowledge the faithfulness of Ed Kitt in calling and giving her rides to and from church. Ed, she appreciated that and your visits ever so much. Your name and what you did for her was heard time and time again when visiting her. May the Lord bless you for the ministry you had to her.)

Susan will be missed by Ed and Betty, extended family, friends, and others who knew her. A vacancy has been left in each of our lives with her passing but we do not deny her the release from earthly sufferings and entrance into eternal rest with her Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Tribute In Memory of Aunt Susan Giesbrecht

(Given by Leona Janzen a niece)

I am the daughter of Aunt Susan's oldest brother Henry Friesen and, like her, the fifth child in the family. However, not from a family of eleven but of twelve. I don't think she and I ever discussed our like ranking in our families. Perhaps for this reason I liked her. Aunt Susan and I also had in common a love for strawberries and roses. Consequently in season it was not difficult to bring her treats which she enjoyed immensely either to devour or to look at. (Usually we shared them!) Until 2002, when she moved to Westbourne Place, I was the only sibling in my family, and perhaps the only niece or nephew, who had contact with her. It was at this time my sister Anne also got to know her, for she was on kitchen staff at Westbourne.

I only have vague memories of my Aunt Susan from the days of my childhood or youth. My family lived a fair distance from the Giesbrechts and I have no recollections of regular Friesen family gatherings at my grandparents when all their families got together. Perhaps it was in part due to my coming from a large family and my parents left us kids at home and there wasn't enough room in the

vehicle for all of us or our grandparent's house wasn't big enough to accommodate their eleven children, their spouses, and their families some of which were relatively large too.

However, when my husband and I were transferred with the bank to Innisfail Alberta in 1962, I was made aware Uncle Ike and Aunt Susan Giesbrecht lived in Bassano which wasn't all that far away. So it was Easter of 1963 we arranged to go and spend the weekend with them. It was from that time onward we had periodic interaction with them where they lived or when they came for a visit to our place when my parents had come from Manitoba. On one occasion when they were living at Vilna, they joined us at the Garner Lake campground where they were staying for the evening. We did not visit them in every community they lived because of distance or didn't know where they were for they, like us as bankers, moved often and changes of address were not always sent.

It was in Bassano where Aunt Susan raised rabbits. A vivid memory of our first visit is she asked if we would like a package of frozen rabbit. I was reluctant to accept that offer, for I never had eaten rabbit, but Jake was quick to accept so the rabbit did come home with us. In the next month or so we had rabbit for lunch and while we enjoyed it, the leftovers were not saved which was unusual for us. (The bones and rib cage reminded us too much as that of a cat)

After Aunt Susan moved to Calgary in 2002 we saw her more frequently when coming into the city to visit our children or my sister Anne and her husband Alvin. In 2003 we ourselves moved to Calgary and visits and phone calls became more frequent. Looking back these were not often enough.

Aunt Susan appreciated it when we came to visit, take her out for lunch, or even on occasion took her shopping for something she wanted. Anne and I always felt Aunt Susan was more content and jovial when we brought our husbands along as they seemed to add spice to her life. She enjoyed coming to our homes for a meal and especially if our families were there too. One of the last times we had her over was on the day of her 94th birthday for crepes and strawberries which she enjoyed and ate well. This will always be a time to be remembered. Anne and I both have smaller grandchildren and little people brought her joy. If you visited her, she would point out a picture of two little boys on the wall and say, "Those are Anne's boys". Perhaps because they were quite little when she got to know them they were a favorite.

When my sisters and my cousin Marie (her Brother John's daughter) were in the city, they made it a priority to visit Aunt Susan as well which she appreciated. Whether it was us locals or those from out of the city, she always would verbally thank you for coming, which confirmed her appreciation for the visit, and perhaps her loneliness, and served as a reminder not to wait too long for the next visit.

If we did not show up for awhile, it wasn't unusual for her to remind us we hadn't been by and like a mother; she liked knowing when we were away.

She was known for her wit, being out spoken, sense of humor, and yes even being prejudiced, making no bones about it. Just this morning Anne's son Kevin shared a memory he had, was her sense of humor when he was at our house with her last Thanksgiving.

Having been a good cook and perhaps one who concentrated on the basics, she did not enjoy prepared foods. Consequently she would have comments about the institutional food served in the hospital or where she lived in latter years. When asking her what they had served for lunch her response would be, "Oh, soup and sandwiches, its just soup and sandwiches all the time". Jake would say, "instead of soup and sandwiches, have sandwiches and soup" to which she would respond with her cute smile and a twinkle in her eyes. Or they had borscht and she would say, "They don't know how to make borscht".

When visiting her she usually did not have her hearing aid in, unless it was her son Ed who had come who made a point of putting it in and turning it up before sitting down on her bed to visit so he would be on the side of her better ear. As a result when you said or asked something her response would be "YEH". This we got to know meant she had not heard. We would then get her attention and repeat ourselves in a louder tone. By the way, sitting on her bed is something she did not like and it was made known to us.

I will always remember her cute little smile and the glint in her eyes. Be it with her teeth in or out for she looked so much like her mother then and always reminded me of my Grandma. Grandma too had a sense of humor and was witty. This must have been a trait Aunt Susan inherited from her.

Though I did not get to know her well until the last few years, I will always have fond memories of my Aunt Susan. She was precious.