



Elvina M. Swails

March 27, 1922 - November 29, 2015

A private family service for Elvina was held on December 7, 2015. Interment will follow in the Geneva Public Cemetery. Memorials are directed to the family for later designation.

Elvina Marie Swails, often called Dine, or Vinie, grandma, and of course mom, or mums, passed away Sunday, November 29, 2015, at Heritage Crossings in Geneva, Nebraska at the age of 93. Elvina was born on March 27, 1922 to Erik and Alma (Mann) Johnson, being one of five children growing up on a farm near Sutton, Nebraska. Through the years she shared many memories of her three brothers, Irvin, Ross and Raymond, teasing her and her younger sister Ila. Among the family's favorite memories she shared was that she had a pet turkey that faithfully followed her around the barnyard. Though times could be hard on the farm and she lost her father at an early age, life was also good for the Johnson family.

Elvina graduated from Geneva High School in 1940 and went on to teach school in a small country school east of Geneva. In time she met a young military man, Elwood Swails, who had enlisted in 1942 and was stationed at the Fairmont Air Base, serving in the Army Air Corp, primarily as a parachute rigger. They married on June 17, 1943 at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on a Saturday night. Elvina shared many memories of those times including the story of her boarding a train all alone and scared, but determined to join Woody in Florida when he was stationed there. She still had a gown her mother made from a silk parachute Woody had sent her while he was serving in Italy, the beautiful workmanship and strength of the silk is apparent, even now after these many years. One of the most touching memories is that of giving birth to their first born child, Eldon Ray, without Woody beside her as he was still serving overseas. He sent lengthy letters and telegrams expressing his concern and sorrow at not being there for their big event. And then the stories of how afraid Eldon was of him when he finally got to come home to them. After Woody's honorable discharge from the military, Elwood and Elvina made their home in Geneva where they were blessed by the births of two more sons, Robert Elwood and James Evens. Woody worked at a few different jobs including Shaner's Oil. In 1952 the Swails family took a leap of faith and opened their own gas station in Geneva. Elvina did

the bookkeeping for the business and Woody worked there daily up until he suffered a stroke on January 8, 2003. During the busy years of running the station and raising three lively boys, the family occasionally got away to Minnesota for a vacation and a bit of fishing. After the boys grew up and left home, Elwood and Elvina still made the occasional trip to Minnesota and with son Jim and wife Linda in Colorado they made numerous trips there. Elvina also made several trips to California to visit son Eldon, making fast and lasting friendships with many of his friends. Trips to see son Bob who had remained closer to home were much more frequent, being easy to combine with shopping trips. Though they had the good fortune to take many other trips including to the Bahamas, one of their biggest traveling adventures was their three sons sending them on a Caribbean cruise for their 40th wedding anniversary. Elwood and Elvina also shared great love for their dog, a brown poodle named Co-Co, a gift from son Eldon and friend Marguerite. They were so attached to Co-Co that after his passing, they purchased a second Co-Co that eventually went to live in Colorado with son Jim and daughter-in-law Linda.

After Woody's stroke he resided permanently at Heritage Crossings in Geneva and Elvina went daily to be with him, often packing a lunch of Woody's favorites. On nice days it was a common sight to see them outside picnicking, much like they would have in their early years. Though their lives had been drastically changed by Woody's condition, Elvina did everything she could to sustain normalcy for them both.

May 5th of 2011 on one of those many visits Elvina suffered a fall, severely breaking her wrist and then became a resident of Heritage Crossings herself. Elvina adjusted well to her new surroundings and of course enjoyed being able to have more time with Woody, until his passing on November 9, 2011. Elvina had many friends in the community and at Heritage Crossings. Through the years she became very close to several staff members as well. Her love for them and theirs for her was very evident. The family takes comfort in knowing she had such care and compassion.

Elvina was a member of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church of Geneva. The Reverend James Sells will officiate at a private family service. She will be laid to rest beside Woody, her dear husband of 68 years, in the Geneva Cemetery.

Remaining to remember Elvina, sons Eldon of Long Beach, California, Bob and wife Connie of Lincoln, Nebraska, Jim and wife Linda of Fort Collins, Colorado; four grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. Elvina was also especially close to her niece Clarice Shaw of Grand Island and nephew John Cowart of Austin, Texas, as well as much extended family and many friends. Included in that group are the loving family at Heritage Crossings – through their kindness and compassion many at Heritage have indeed become family to Elvina.

When she is remembered many will recall her as Elvina, some as “Aunt Dine”, some will think of her as “Vinie”, of course to her loving sons she will always be “Mom” or “Mums”, but to all that knew her she will forever be a sweet gentle memory. Taken from a letter she wrote to her sons many years ago, to be opened and read on this occasion, she said, “On Christmas Eve, if there is a small star up in the sky look at it and let it come into your heart, and remember me.”

Comments



“ Thank all of you for your kind thoughts
Eldon R. Swails

Eldon R. Swails - December 10, 2015 at 05:09 PM



“ I remember visiting your mom when I was little with my mom. She was awesome and I always loved going there! She was always full of hugs..... and cookies! :) She was a great lady and I'm glad I knew her! I know she'll be missed by many. Your family is in my thoughts and prayers.
Ann Hurst

Ann Hurst - December 09, 2015 at 08:29 AM



“ With Love and Sorrow ~ Evie Traphagen purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Elvina M. Swails.



With Love and Sorrow ~ Evie Traphagen - December 05, 2015 at 05:07 PM



“ Elvina was a customer of mine for years. She had the sweetest little poodle. I enjoyed our visits when she would come out to the farm. She was a very kind lady.
Mary (Novak) Brinkman

Mary Brinkman - December 02, 2015 at 09:37 AM



“ Thank you, the family appreciates your kind words. She did love her poodle, Co-Co.
Bob and Connie Swails - December 07, 2015 at 08:09 PM



“ Elvina was such a special lady. I first met her while Woody was a resident at Heritage. She was so dedicated in always coming to see him. I really enjoyed getting to know her during this time. Then she became a resident herself so I got to see even more of her...especially since she lived down my hall. She was always a pleasure to be around and always had a smile on her face. She will be missed dearly but so happy she will get to see Woody again.

Sincerely,
Corinne Downey (former CNA)

Corinne Downey - December 01, 2015 at 07:05 PM



“ Corinne, we remember you well and missed you when you left Heritage. Thank you so much for your good heart and giving them both such good care.

Bob and Connie Swails - December 07, 2015 at 08:11 PM



“ Eldon, Bob and Jim

Sorry to read of the passing of your mother. She is one of the last one from the old neighborhood. Remember we had lots of good times. Those were the good old days when our mothers were home when we left for school and got home. We were very lucky. Don't know if Bob remembers cutting Pattys' hair with plastic scissors. They were in your folks living room and I believe our moms were having coffee in the kitchen and Patty wanted her hair cut so Bob did it.

Please know you are all in our thoughts and prayers. If you can locate a copy of the poem "My First Christmas In Heaven" which goes along with your Mom's letter to you.

God Bless You All,

Jim & Pam (Clark) Schroeder
Fairbury, NE

Pam (Clark) Schroeder - December 01, 2015 at 05:54 PM



“ Pam, thank you so much for the condolences and for the memories. Those really were the good old days! If you ever need your hair cut, get ahold of me and I'll round up a pair of plastic scissors. I'm sure I still have the talent I had then!
We will find and read the poem. Thank you again.

Bob and Connie Swails - December 07, 2015 at 08:19 PM



“ A very special lady has departed this earthly life to be reunited with the love of her life. Giving, caring and loving were a part of her daily life which she did effortlessly. So many memories of times spent with Elvina and all of you will live on in my heart forever. I thank God for the special ways she touched my life all these years. Peace and comfort to all of you. Marcy [Hintz] Meyer

Marcy Meyer - December 01, 2015 at 09:37 AM



“ We were looking forward to seeing you, Marcy, but we do understand. Thanks for your kind words about mom. She thought the world of you too and appreciated it that you kept in touch.

Bob and Connie Swails - December 07, 2015 at 08:22 PM