



## Bertha Marie Swinburnson

November 6, 1921 - July 10, 2015

Toots Swinburnson, long time Lynden resident, passed away peacefully on July 10th at the age of 93. Born Bertha Marie Kehl in Boyd (Carbon County) Montana on Nov 6, 1921 she was mercifully nicknamed 'Toots' as an infant by the minister at her baptism. It stuck. Her parents, Gabriel and Anna Kehl, already had five of their nine children when they emigrated from the German settled Black Sea area of Russia in 1909. The rest, with Toots being the last and largest at 13 pounds, were born on the trek west from Ellis Island as the family 'worked' its way across the country.

Toots married Walter Swinburnson in 1944. They settled in Lynden and spent the next nearly 50 years there together. They were charter members of Hope Lutheran Church. Trained in beauty school in San Francisco during the early part of World War II, Toots worked as a beauty operator locally for 20 years. That gave way to a career as office manager at JC Penney Co. in Lynden until retirement after another 20 plus years. In later years, she was a multiple gallon blood donor, volunteered as a member of the mobile mammogram team in Whatcom County, and worked a ticket gate at the Northwest Washington Fair every year until she was almost 90 years old. She loved spending time with family and friends, playing cards, and was an avid (and perennially disappointed) Mariners fan. She was sweet and caring but could literally and figuratively pack a wallop – a great and loyal friend but a very formidable adversary.

Toots is survived by her two sons, Kurt (Andrea) of Kauai, Hawaii and Cory (Julia) of Blaine. She has 8 grandchildren (Mike, Dina, Gabe, Ryan, Tyler, Nolana, Brianna, and Rachel), seven great grandchildren (Ariel, Ella, Cooper, Grady, Jesse, Bella, and Maverick) and one great great grandchild (Penelope). Her husband, Walt, preceded her in death (1993), as did all of her siblings. She was a loving aunt to many nieces and nephews, some who preceded her and others who will grieve her departure. Also missing her will be many friends in and around the Lynden area.

Until age 91 she lived alone but her last 18 months were spent at Good Samaritan – Stafholt in Blaine. She loved the staff and residents there. The superlative loving care she received at Stafholt cannot be overstated.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Sat. July 25, at 2:00pm at Moles Farewell Tributes – Greenacres, 5700 Northwest Dr, Ferndale. She will be laid to rest next to Walt in a private burial at Greenacres Memorial Park.

Please share your memories of Toots at [wordpress-271002-1416095.cloudwaysapps.com](https://wordpress-271002-1416095.cloudwaysapps.com)

# Tribute Wall

SU

“ Toots was also a great cook. I still love to make her Bean Burrito Bake and Chicken Cabbage Salad recipes she shared with me in 1988. My condolences.

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**Susan** - July 10, 2015 at 12:00 AM

NH

“ Toots became a very important part of my life while living at Heather Square in Lynden... where my mom & step-dad lived (Bert Abrams & Cecil). We had many a card game during mom's years in the apartment complex. The, my mom moved to Meadow Greens and we would often pick up Toots for a dinner, card club, and/or any social function she decided she wanted to attend. Always loved her sense of humor and knowledge of what life is all about. She has a very special place in my heart and I am so sorry I could not be there for her after she moved to Staffholt. She has already been greatly missed by my mom & I. RIP Toots. PS. Never knew you shared a birth name with mom that neither one of you claimed!!!!

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**Nancy Haugness** - July 10, 2015 at 12:00 AM

CC

“ Do you love that beautiful picture? Who do you know that at 70ish just got her first tattoo? Says a lot about her! She was an amazing aunt for years till my mom died then she moved into my “mom” category for me. You could always depend on her for unconditional love....she might say you were a “dumb ass”, but always with that cute sparkly smile and ALWAYS with love in her heart! On her many visits to California (by the way, usually with one to three days notice) anyone who met her instantly liked her....she brightened up the room. She could relate to anyone and any situation...One fun memory for me is when she went to this fancy spa in the Sonoma Valley with my daughter Erin and me! We had a wonderful time. Often, as on this trip, we would take her to Rohnert Park to spend some time with her old (very old) friend Emma. The two of them apart could be a handful, but the two of them together were a force to be reckoned with! One can only imagine what the two of them were up to when they were young. Their relationship was one to be envied, filled with love and tomfoolery. I feel so blessed to have had her in my life and to have bathed in the love she showed me! Both she and Uncle Walt, each in their own way, taught me much about life. Get ready Walt the boss is back in town!

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**carole carlson** - July 10, 2015 at 12:00 AM

LM

“ I will miss seeing you when I visit Stafholt, Toots. You always greeted me with a great smile and a warm hand to squeeze. I’m so grateful I had some time with you at your bedside the day before you passed on to your next great adventure. I hope you could hear my prayers for you and knew how much I love you. I will miss you, dear lady, and hope to see you again someday. My best to Cory and the rest of the family.  
With condolences,  
Lorna McGowan-Smith

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**Lorna McGowan-Smith** - July 10, 2015 at 12:00 AM