



Elsbeth ""Beth"" Swigert Holt

April 12, 1923 - December 28, 2007

Elsbeth "Beth" Holt was a woman of true character, with a love for teaching and learning, a love exceeded only by the passion she held for the family and grandchildren she held so dear to her heart. In the year 1923, the country was getting into the swing of the Roaring Twenties, with flappers and speakeasies. The cities thrived with the booming sounds of industry, as Ford Motor produced its two millionth automobile and Welch's introduced grape jelly for the first time. For Clyde F. Swigert and his wife, Dorothy E., of St. Joseph, Michigan, it was also a time of growth for their family. Already the proud parents of one daughter, on April 12, they delighted in welcoming their second daughter, Elsbeth, who completed the Swigert household. Along with her older sister Dorothy, Elsbeth, or Beth as she was called, created many wonderful childhood memories growing up in St. Joe. As a young girl, she loved to be outside, playing or helping in the garden, and she especially enjoyed their many trips to Devils River to visit her grandparents. Her father provided well for the family as the Superintendent of St. Joseph Machine, and later at St. Joseph Plating. Beth received her education in the St. Joseph Public Schools and graduated in 1941. In addition to being a good student, Beth excelled tremendously when it came to music, especially as a violinist. A truly exceptional player, she had the honor of playing with the St. Joseph Symphony while she was still in high school. This love of music would stay with Beth throughout her life, influencing her career choices and providing her with many hours of enjoyment. After high school, Beth enrolled in classes at

Oberlin College for a year, during which time she sat second chair for violin. She then transferred to Michigan State University, but unfortunately missed her first year after an accident. Beth broke her back while riding her horse but somehow managed to walk the mile back to the stable for help. The following year, she returned to school and went on to graduate in 1946, with a Bachelor's degree in Music Education. Shortly thereafter, Beth accepted her first teaching position in the Marshall Public Schools, teaching choir. Beth began more than just a career at Marshall. It was while on a blind date with some friends at a Marshall football game that she met Dalton Holt, a young man just out of the military. The two hit it off right from the start, and to Dalton's surprise, Beth already knew his father, the choir director at a local church. Romance soon blossomed between the two and they were happily married in a beautiful garden ceremony at Beth's parents' home in Benton Harbor on August 23, 1947. Over the next several years, the couple was blessed with four beautiful daughters: Susan (1948), Sally (1950), Shelly (1956) and Calista (1961), who brought them great pride and joy. Beth's happiest moments always involved the time she spent with her husband and daughters. They loved to be outdoors, and over the years, they took many memorable camping trips to the Upper Peninsula on Brevoort Lake near St. Ignace, and spent countless weekends at their cabin on Gun Lake. In 1987, Beth and Dalton enjoyed a breathtaking trip to Alaska. Beth always had a close-knit family, whom she loved dearly, but she and her sister Dorothy had an especially strong bond throughout their lives. The Holt home was a place of pride for Beth, and she made it warm and welcoming for anyone who visited. At Christmas, she used her amazing creativity to beautifully decorate the house, making it special for her family year after year. Pampering people was just part of Beth's nature, yet she also had a genuine love for animals, especially horses. She took great pride in helping her daughter start Spring Dale Morgan Farms. She also enjoyed being an equestrian 4-H leader in Mason County for many years. Besides being a devoted wife and mother, Beth also continued teaching. After some time at Marshall, she left to teach grades

K-8 at the one-room schoolhouses of Evans and Curtis Schools in Berrien County. She, Dalton and the girls then moved to Coloma where Beth began teaching first grade at Watervliet Public Schools. During this time, Beth returned to school herself and earned her Master's degree in Counseling from Western Michigan University in 1971. The next year, she retired from her 26-year teaching career. Shortly after her retirement, Beth's husband, Dalton, took a teaching job with the Ludington Public Schools, which led them to move to their cabin on Gun Lake in Fountain, Michigan. Beth then designed a new home for them, which Dalton built on the peninsula of the lake. Here, the view was magnificent and they could admire it out of all the windows on every side of their new home. With more leisure time, Beth enjoyed many hobbies, including knitting sweaters and making hooked rugs. She always found time to pursue her music, including playing the piano by ear. It goes without saying that education was always a top priority in the Holt's household, especially since Beth, Dalton, and three of their daughters were all educators. With a firm hand and gentle heart, Beth impacted thousands of young lives during her many years of teaching. Her great sense of humor was sure to fill the classroom with laughter and smiles! With a love for music in her soul and a love for family in her heart, Beth approached each day as an opportunity to bring happiness to those around her. She will be deeply missed, but her generous spirit, sense of humor and unconditional love will endure as an example to all who knew and loved her. Elsbeth died early Friday morning, December 28, 2007, at the Manistee County Medical Care Facility after a short battle with Alzheimer's disease. She was preceded in death by her parents, and, earlier this month, her sister, Dorothy. She will be greatly missed by her husband, Dalton; her daughters: Susan and Richard Hays of Fountain, Sally Reed, Shelly and George Bray, and Calista and Dave Swanson, all of Ludington; 12 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren. A Celebration of Life Service will be held for Beth at 11:00 a.m. on Monday, December 31, at the Stephens Funeral Home in Scottville, with Rev. James Schroeder of Our

Savior Lutheran Church officiating. Burial will take place at Bachelor Cemetery at a later date. Friends may meet with her family for a time of visitation on Sunday, December 30, from 2-4 p.m. at the funeral home. For those who wish, memorial contributions may be made to the Manistee County Medical Care Facility. Please visit www.stephensfuneralhome.net where you may share a memory with Beth's family or sign her online guestbook. Funeral arrangements are being cared for by Wyman Funeral & Cremation Services ~ Stephens Funeral Home.