



Audrey J. Lancaster

July 31, 1926 - May 11, 2015

Audrey J. Lancaster, 88, of East Wenatchee passed away on May 11, 2015. She was born on July 31, 1926, to the late Peter T. and Dorothy E. (Waterbury) Swager at Carlton, Washington. At the time of her birth, Peter Swager was an orchardist in the Methow Valley. For the rest of her life, Audrey was involved in the fruit industry, either as a picker, packer, or wife of a grower.

When Audrey was a young child, her family left the Methow to live near Rock Island, Washington, where Peter Swager grew apricots. In time, Audrey met her future husband, the late Stephen (Steve) K. Lancaster, at Wenatchee High School. They married on January 25, 1943, at St Joseph's Catholic Church before her husband went off to war in the Pacific Theater. After Steve's discharge in 1946, the couple lived in Wenatchee and then near the junction of Rock Island Road and SR 28. In 1952, the couple moved to N. Nile Avenue west of Pangborn Field. There Steve and Audrey completed their family of eight children. The couple also purchased surrounding land and planted orchard, both cherries and apples, in the early 1960's. They remained on N. Nile until Steve's passing in 2009 and Audrey's eventual move to Bonaventure of East Wenatchee in 2013.

Between raising a large family and tending the orchard, Audrey found little time to develop outside interests. Her gift was to color every day chores with warmth and cheerfulness. Milking the cow, her hair tied in a scarf, was accompanied by quiet singing. She sang to herself as she cooked dinner or

made lunch. Her children won't forget the little songs she sang as the day passed. She always made time for morning coffee with Pat Mitchell, a neighbor and friend. Her large garden fed the family but also gave her, in the evening hours, a place to relax. She sold strawberries for extra money and even sold surplus milk from the cow. She worked tirelessly, with no complaint. Her life became ordered by the seasons. It became a time to plow, a time to plant, a time to put up fruit and vegetables, a time to pick,. No one in the family can look at a hollyhock and not think of Audrey. She loved her flowers, and the yard became her palette in pinks, reds, and stunning golds. In winter, Audrey and her girls made quilts; for Easter they made dresses. Audrey baked bread, made pies, and served cinnamon rolls that her children and others still dream about. For the holiday season, Audrey cooked huge meals for family, relatives, and guests: roast turkey for Thanksgiving and Christmas, for New Year's a chicken roaster that she had raised the previous spring. All meals were accompanied by seven or eight pies, cake, fudge and several types of candies, all hand made. How this five-foot mother did it all defies belief. Eventually, as the children left home, Audrey and Steve "took to the hills," as they put it, picking huckleberries and picking mushrooms and generally just looking around. They'd stop at a "pretty place," make tea, and let the dogs run. Audrey, it needs to be said, had a way with animals. She always owned dogs, and they often owned her, but she had touch to put them at ease. And for her entire life, Audrey was a passionate reader. Every evening, no matter how hectic, she read. It was her chance to claim a bit of the day. Every two weeks for some time, she walked a mile from her house to the corner of Nile and Grant Road, kids in tow, to check out books from the Bookmobile. Grocery sacks loaded up with books, she'd trudge back home. Eventually, the Bookmobile driver saw the light, changed his route, and parked the Bookmobile in Audrey's driveway during his runs. The facts of her life fade in comparison to the effect she had on people. She was a mother in the broadest sense, a friend to all, a listener without peer, a wise person who always saw the best in people. Her house was open to

everyone and at all times. The many friends of her children were welcome regardless of the circumstance. Her house became a refuge when needed. Steve and Audrey befriended many immigrants who worked in their orchard, and they took in a few. Some, in time, became friends and protectors who watched over the pair in their later years. Audrey loved so many, and was loved by so many in return. She will be missed.

Audrey's family would like to thank the caregivers at Bonaventure of East Wenatchee for their help during past two years. For someone like Audrey who was such a caregiver during her life, it is comforting to us to know that she was loved and appreciated there.

Audrey is survived by her children Jeanette Griggs of East Wenatchee, Susan Miller of East Wenatchee, Michael Lancaster of Monitor, Peter Lancaster of Seattle, Patricia Sorrentino of Holland, Pennsylvania, and Beverly Odland of Athol, Idaho; and by her two brothers, Robert Swager of Wenatchee and Donald Swager of Hermiston, Oregon. She is also survived by 18 grandchildren, 18 great-grandchildren, and 10 great-great grandchildren.

Audrey was preceded in death by her parents Peter and Dorothy Swager, son Stephen K. Jr. and daughter Karen, granddaughter Amy, great-granddaughter Kayla, one sister Mary Margery Burts (Swager) and one brother Gary Swager. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10:00 a.m. Tuesday, May 19th, at Holy Apostles Catholic Church in East Wenatchee. Concluding services and interment will follow at Evergreen Memorial Park in East Wenatchee. Visitation will be held at Telford's Chapel of the Valley in East Wenatchee from 10 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday, April 18th, followed by a rosary at 6 p.m. Arrangements are by Telford's Chapel of the Valley. Memorial donations can be made to the MS Society.