Betty Maud Chamberlin

April 22, 1931 ~ November 17, 2022

On November 17, 2022 the garden pulled up its leafy blanket one last time. Our mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, friend and beloved teacher laid her burden to rest in her home in East Millcreek after ninety-one years.

Betty was born in Bradford, West Yorkshire, England on April 22, 1931, as her favorites daffodils were blooming on the hills between the dry-stone walls of the green hills above the River Aire. They made Earth Day in honor of our Earth Mother, from the first a force of nature.

Named Frances Elizabeth Maud, in part for “her” queen who shares this death year, Betty was the only daughter of a warp twister, Arthur Henry Maud, and a seamstress, Frances Lyda Whitaker. Her older brother, Ralph Noel Maud, preceded her in death. Her younger brother Arthur, with whom she sang in St. Mark’s choir in Utley, now lives in Minnesota. You can look up both of her brothers in Wikipedia.

“I was the safest child in England,” she used to say. The eight years of bombings and rationing of World War II nonetheless left her unable to tell much of that good half of her childhood, apart from the time she, alone at home, had to hold up the blackout cover over the window with a broom handle. More than one grandchild wrote up that story “The Night Betty Maud Saved England” for a class assignment.

She attended Keighley Girls’ Grammar School, where she was known as “Swot Maud”: “swot: [Brit. Colloq.] to study hard.” Our cousins called her St. Betty.

After the War, her mother moved the family to Salt Lake to join many aunts, uncles and cousins who had already immigrated, drawn by the LDS Church.

With a good British education, Betty already knew more than they could teach her at West High, so she immediately enrolled at the University of Utah. She was active in the Foreign Students’ Association, lost her Yorkshire accent the night before she had to teach her first class as a graduate student, and earned a Master’s in mathematics with a project on an old Marchant calculator to aid the US military.

On June 13, 1953, “under a quadratic sign”, Betty married her professor, Richard Eliot Chamberlin, who preceded her in death in 1994. Together they raised six children: Ann (Curt Setzer), Ralph (Ute Kallmeyer), Fran, Martha (John Sechrest), Alice (Keith Quigley), and Helen (Russell Hill), most of whom earned higher degrees in the sciences. She sewed our unfashionable clothes but was the best math tutor. Even though she didn’t approve of fiction, she did approve of good grammar and spelling, and helped there, too, beginning with an English children’s dictionary—not so much help in the spelling department.

Besides these six children, Betty quietly and lovingly helped raise ten grandchildren especially Liz (Davies), Nathaniel, Katherine, and Emily Quigley while their mother Alice fought cancer to then pass away while they were

all very young. Seven great-grandchildren, twenty-four foster children, scores of Primary children and hundreds of Head Start (in South Salt Lake) and kindergarten (in Millcreek) children also felt the effects of her care. Betty saw to it that no kindergartener graduated from her classroom to the strains of Respighi without knowing the basics of reading. “I always liked it when a child called me ‘Grandma’ by mistake,” she said.

After retiring, Betty continued to volunteer in the elementary classroom and with genetic studies at the Huntsman Cancer Center. She loved to sing in any choir, including the Utah Shape Note Singers.

More than anything, our mother loved her garden. Very little that she fed us was not grown, canned or frozen by herself, including the grinding of her own wheat for bread: everything from the spring’s first fresh peas to bottled pears in a Christmas salad. When an attempt was made to take her fingerprints for her volunteer work, it was discovered that she had none; she’d worn them away in the dirt.

Betty eventually inherited the house and half an acre in East Millcreek that began as two adobe rooms our great grandmother moved into when she was widowed with thirteen children. For us, it was always “Grandma’s house”, and Betty had learned from her mother-in-law which apple trees had come across the Plains in a covered wagon and how to fight for her irrigation rights on the Brigham Young Ditch. Every kitchen scrap went through egg-laying chickens to compost. And every rose bush she planted had to provide fragrance, too.

Earth Mother Betty refused to own a dryer, even when she had three in diapers, so no one was surprised when she slipped on a rock hanging laundry on one of the last warm, clear, sunny days of 2022. She lay for hours under a cloudless Utah sky with a broken hip unable to reach her old flip phone.

How she loved the Yorkshire rain.

The family wants to thank Community Nursing Services who helped during Mom’s last days.

Farmer slips on a
rotted peach, prays in silence
for the killing frost.
--a haiku our mother helped write for a daughter’s high school English class

The daffodils our mother planted will bloom again.

Visitation Sunday November 20, 2022 6-8pm at Larkin Mortuary 260 E. South Temple. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests a donation to the Huntsman Cancer Institute.