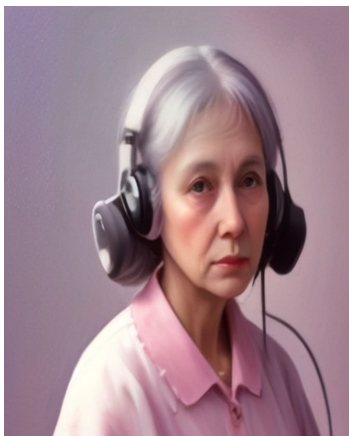




Frances Adele Swoboda

August 25, 1940 - September 3, 2026

Lincoln, Nebraska

Frances Adele Swoboda died in Lincoln on September 3, 2026. She was eighty-six. Born there on August 25, 1940, she grew up in a house where the telephone was treated as a public trust and a pot of soup was treated as a ministry. She learned a switchboard before she learned a highway. A correct number, she said, is a form of respect.

She spent thirty-one years as an operator, then as the woman who trained new hires that a wrong connection is not a joke when someone is calling a hospital. She did not put her name on a committee. She put other people's voices in the right order. When the company put in a machine that was supposed to replace a person, she learned the machine and then taught it manners. She retired with a pin and a cake she tried to leave early.

She married Howard Swoboda in 1961. He sold seed and died in 1999. They raised a son and a daughter who still argue about who got the last piece of kolache. Frances kept the garden of peonies, and the habit of leaving a casserole on a porch without a speech. She sat through long meetings the way other people sit through weather.

Grandchildren remember a woman who corrected their thank-you notes more than their homework, who kept a biscuit tin of paper clips, and who could name every operator in the building by the mug she no longer used. She died in Lincoln, in the heat she had always said you could live with if you dressed for it. The board is someone else's now. The patience she practiced there is harder to replace than a headset.

Services

A funeral in Lincoln with one familiar hymn, sung slowly. A gift to a school supply fund is welcome.

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