



† Ruth Ellen Smith †

August 6, 1929 - October 2, 2022

The youngest of ten children, Ruth Ellen Shrader was born on August 6, 1929, on a farm in Orchard, Nebraska. She lived there until her father passed away when she was nine and the farm was lost. She and her mother moved to Gering, Nebraska where she graduated from Gering High School at the age of 16.

Ruth corresponded with her brother-in-law's Naval buddy, Gatewood Smith, during the Korean conflict. After "Smitty" left the Navy and moved back to Hollywood, California, he took a trip to Nebraska to meet his pen pal. He and Ruth continued to write letters, she took a trip to Hollywood to visit him, and she met his parents. At the end of the trip they were engaged to be married. They married in Gering on August 14, 1947.

Smitty and Ruth lived in Gering while he attended Scottsbluff Junior College and worked various jobs. While living there, they had their first daughter, Karen. When Smitty graduated they moved to Greeley, Colorado, where their second daughter, Kay, was born. Smitty attended Colorado State College and graduated with a BS in Education. While in Greeley, Smitty received news that his father was terminally ill with lung cancer. This prompted the family to leave the

Midwest and move to California to help care for his father.

The family lived with Smitty's parents until his father passed away and then moved to Long Beach, California where Smitty taught science at a junior high. Meanwhile, Ruth cared for the children and learned to drive. She missed her close-knit Nebraska family desperately but was strong and determined to build a family of her own.

Unhappy teaching in an inner-city school, Smitty began to look for positions in other places. When offered a teaching position in Medford, Oregon, he accepted immediately and began a long career of teaching math at Medford Senior High School. As the children grew, Ruth began to work part-time at one of the grade schools in the cafeteria. She continued in school food service and eventually managed the school cafeteria at Medford Senior High School and then Crater High School.

Ruth and Smitty were active charter members of the United Church of Christ in Medford. Smitty sang in the choir and was chairman of the building committee when the church built its new building and then again when a fellowship hall was added. Ruth designed the kitchen in the fellowship

hall and was active in the women's fellowship group. They attended bible studies and were involved in most church activities.

Not only was Ruth an amazing cook, but she was also an avid seamstress. She made nearly all the girls' clothes as well as her own. Karen and Kay had the best dressed dolls in the neighborhood with full wardrobes for each kind of doll. She spent many evenings sewing late into the night making doll clothes.

Ruth and Smitty remained close to her Nebraska family her entire life. Her family gathered every three years to have a giant family reunion and Ruth and the family attended nearly all of them. The family always drove and made stops along the way visiting many National Parks and other sites. The first stop would always be LaGrande, Oregon, where Ruth's sister, brother-in-law and niece lived. Both families would travel together making the trip that much more fun for all.

When Smitty couldn't go because he had to go to school, Ruth would take the girls and go. The whole family loved the Shrader reunions and continued going long after the girls were grown.

During the summers when there was no reunion, the family would often go to Smitty's family's cabin in Santa Cruz, California. Those trips usually included Ruth's sister, Eva and family from LaGrande. Smitty and Bud, Eva's husband, were close because of their Naval experience and Cathy, their daughter, was close to Karen and Kay's age. Christmas was nearly always spent in LaGrande together as Eva and Bud owned a donut shop and needed to stay home.

Ruth loved spending time with her grandkids and great grandkids. The Medford grandkids grew up spending many hours at "Mom mom's" house. Kay's children and grandkids were farther north and didn't get as much time with their grandparents but always felt welcomed and loved.

After Ruth and Smitty retired they continued to love to travel. They had an RV group that they belonged to and traveled and camped with. They also traveled across the US for several months visiting family and friends. When their daughter Kay, moved to Ireland for two years, they went to visit.

When they could no longer travel because of Smitty's Alzheimer's they spent every evening hosting Ruth's sister, Ruby, fixing her dinner and watching TV together. Ruth continued

these evenings after Smitty died until Ruby passed away in 2008. Then Ruth left her home and moved into Horton Plaza, an assisted living facility. Needing more care, she moved again to a foster home with a beautiful, caring couple who treated her like family. Ruth passed away October 2, 2022.



† Ruth Ellen Smith †

August 6, 1929 - October 2, 2022