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Marilyn Smith Van Stralen



Aug. 14, 1933 - Nov. 13, 2021

Marilyn Smith Van Stralen, born August 14, 1933, beloved mother and grandmother, passed away at the age 88 on Nov. 13 in Moraga, California.

Marilyn's beauty and sophistication were admired by all but it may surprise you to know she was born in Wibaux, Montana and grew up on a farm. She helped her mother and brother work the farm without her father who died when she was 2 years old. She loved her farm life, which toughened her but did not harden her. She shared fascinating and funny stories about farm life such as backing up into the chicken coop when learning to drive and making ice cream in December with the fresh milk she collected from the cows. We learned that you do not wash the dishes you "warsh" the dishes. We also learned that dinner was served in the middle of the day for extra sustenance during the long days harvesting the wheat fields. Supper was a lighter meal served in the evening. Marilyn's Midwest work ethic was passed on to her children.

Perhaps it was on the farm that she developed her love for all things pigs. She used pig cocktail napkins, pig spatulas and had an entire wall artfully decorated with pigs of every shape and size. If you were lucky, she sent you a pig birthday card.

Her mother, Kathryn A Smith, encouraged Marilyn to pursue new opportunities and attend college. She

entered the University of Colorado and joined the Alpha Delta Pi sorority. There, she met a meal hasher named John C Van Stralen, who became her husband. Marilyn had a respected resiliency which served her well throughout her many life challenges. After raising two children she went back to college to finish her education. She boldly moved to new cities for new adventures making a home in Sacramento, California, Moline, Illinois, Ithaca, New York, and finally Moraga, California. In each place she developed cherished friendships because of her generosity, genuine concern for others and her sparkling presence. She left a special mark on all she met.

Marilyn adored her grandchildren and she was a tireless cheerleader at all their activities. You could see her bundled up at lacrosse games, soccer games, cross country races, and water polo games. She never missed a musical or a concert and was ready to greet each performer with flowers.

Marilyn was the ultimate entertainer which was her way of demonstrating just how much she cared for each and every person who stepped into her home. Her dining table was set to perfection always with a beautiful flower arrangement which she created. Holiday gatherings were joyous and yummy. Her tasty recipes for soft ginger cookies, seasoned oyster crackers, and our favorite chocolate wafer roll will be recreated by the entire family. Creating a beautiful experience for everyone extended into her garden, which was her ultimate passion.

Known by all was Marilyn's impeccable sense of style, simple but elegant. Her fashion sense was fostered by her mother who ordered beautiful clothes from Chicago for her. Marilyn paid attention to the details: a gold bumble bee pin on her shoulder, a beautiful flower added to any outfit, her strict adherence to gold but not silver.

Marilyn has left a legacy of love, generosity and creativity that will long be cherished and remembered by family and friends.

She is survived by her daughter Kim, her husband Brian and their three daughters Leahna, Rachael and Jocelyn: her son, Kris, his wife Mollie and their three children Lauren, Nicole and Owen.

She was preceded in death by her parents Jesse and Kathryn A Smith, her brother Earl Smith, and her loving partner of 14 years Ron Ertola.

Marilyn's memorial will be held on Jan. 8, 2022 at 2 p.m. at Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church, 10 Moraga Valley Ln., Moraga, California.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Animal Rescue Foundations (ARF). Be sure to check the box

"Make this a memorial gift for Marilyn Van Stralen." <https://give.arflife.org/page/35246/donate/1>

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