



Marguerite "Peggy" Smith

Life Story

Many people go through life simply being alive, without ever experiencing its fullness and joy. Marguerite "Peggy" Smith was a woman full of life and enjoyed her every breath. Through work and play, hardship and illness, she never lost sight of the things that truly mattered. A loving wife, mother and grandmother, Peggy's smile and laughter filled each day with sunshine.

1925 found the country right in the middle of the Roaring Twenties. For those living in big cities, it was a time of flappers and speakeasies, while those living in small towns focused on hard work and raising families. Howard and Ilo (Decker) Smith lived in the village of Paw Paw, Michigan, just west of Kalamazoo. Already the proud parents of son, Art, on August 21, 1925, the couple delighted in welcoming the birth of their daughter, Marguerite Ellen. Peggy, as she was called, enjoyed a typical childhood growing up in Paw Paw. She received her education in the area schools, where she met a young girl named Miriam, who became her lifelong friend. Just days before Peggy's death, Miriam visited her at Upjohn, like she had throughout Peggy's life there. She sent cards that arrived like clockwork the entire time Peggy was at Upjohn Community Care Center. After graduation from high school at sixteen, Peggy went off to Western, where she majored in theatre. The famous Laura Shaw, of Western's Laura Shaw Theatre was one of her professors.

At twenty, Peggy and Miriam took off for Los Angeles, where Miriam's sister lived. In late 1945, while trying to return to Michigan for the Christmas holidays, Peggy had difficulty getting a seat on the train, as soldiers and their families were given priority. It just so happened that a soldier friend of Miriam's husband had the same last name as Peggy, and he told the conductor that she was his wife, therefore she was able to get a seat. As fate would have it, Jack Smith and Peggy fell hopelessly in love and were happily married only 2 weeks later on January 2, 1946.

Jack was a career military man, which meant the young newlyweds moved around quite often. While Jack fulfilled his responsibilities in the service, Peggy was busy in several clubs and activities organized by the military wives, serving as President of various Officer's Wives Club's. A Navy officer's wife could be crucial to his career, and Jack said that Peggy's charismatic ways helped move him up the ladder. Maria was born during a stint in Thailand; Cindy at a Marine base in Yuma, AZ. After retiring from the Navy in Key West, FL, the family continued to live there, eventually moving to Jacksonville, FL. While Jack continued his work as an accountant, Peggy found great success as a real estate broker and was numbered to the Million Dollar Club for several years. She later began selling life insurance as well.

Peggy and Jack had a wonderful marriage. They were truly devoted to each other and never lost the passion that first brought them together. Jack just adored his beloved Peggy, and not a day passed that he didn't affectionately call her his "bride." The couple was fortunate enough to be able to retire while in their late 50s, so they were able to enjoy many years of retirement before age and health issues arose.

Peggy was an avid gardener, and her tomatoes were legendary. They loved traveling, and had traversed the U.S. in their travel trailer with many of their good friends. After retiring, the couple made their home in Michigan on West Lake and later on Sunset Lake. They enjoyed spending the summer months here, however, when the snow began to fly, they headed to Florida to enjoy the warmth and sunshine for the winter. No matter which house they lived in though, the couple was always surrounded by a series of cats. When you entered their home, first you saw a "No Smoking" sign, then a "Meow Spoken Here" sign. At one point, when still childless, they raised Siamese show cats. A real thrill seeker, Peggy became a licensed pilot and no one was prouder than Jack on the day she took her first solo flight. In the last few days of his life, Jack confided to Maria that "Peggy was really the adventurous one. I was just playing a role."

Aside from being a devoted wife, Peggy was a loving mother, grandmother and great grandmother. She and the entire family were anxiously awaiting the birth of her second great granddaughter. Although Peggy's life was happy, it was also marked by great sorrow. Peggy lost her beloved Jack on February 15, 2005, after 59 years of marriage. It wasn't long after his passing that Peggy's health began to rapidly decline. About 4 years ago, she went to live at the Upjohn Community Care Center, where she passed away on Tuesday, April 7, 2009, surrounded by her loving daughters.

Throughout her life, Peggy always had a smile on her face and laughter in her heart. She had one of those great, musical laughs. It is her laugh and mischievous grin that her family will always remember.

Visit with Peggy's family and friends and view her life story film on Friday, April 10, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Life Story Funeral Home, 409 South Main Street, Vicksburg (649-1697). A graveside service will be held on Friday at 1:30 p.m. at Fort Custer National Cemetery.

Peggy was preceded in death by her husband, Jack. Her family includes her daughters: Maria Smith and Cindy (Brian) Simmons; her grandchildren: Justin Conner and Mical DeGraaff; her great-granddaughter, Jessalyn Conner; and her brother, Art Smith; plus nieces and nephews and other relatives. Please visit Peggy's memory page at www.lifestorynet.com where you may share a memory or photo with her family or sign her online guest book before coming to the funeral home. Memorial contributions may be made to Borgess Visiting Nurse and Hospice.