Robyn Smith

AUGUST 28, 2023



Robyn Smith, peace activist and Raging Grannie, died peacefully in Vancouver on August 28th, 2023 at the age of 96. Born to Charlie and Edna Clark on September 9, 1926, she enjoyed a happy childhood with her older brothers Leslie and Jack in the small lumber and pulp mill company town of Ocean Falls, BC. Activities included fishing with her father, piano and singing lessons with her mother, playing with her brothers and friends, and traveling by Union Pacific Steamships to spend summer vacations with relatives in Vancouver.

Robyn spent her last year of high school at York House in Vancouver and completed her Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of British Columbia in 1947. Her years at UBC were some of her happiest. She was active with bridge clubs, musicals, and lead the 4th Year Arts Women. With many men at war, she spent summers stacking lumber and time keeping at the mill in Ocean Falls where they processed Sitka spruce for the Mosquito bombers. She lamented the removal of her Japanese friends to Alberta during this time.

Following university, Vancouver became Robyn’s home where she worked at various offices and in social work positions. She met her future husband Dave in 1948 and they were married in 1951. Dave and Robyn had two sons - Barney born in 1954 and Fraser in 1955. Initially living in Burnaby, the family moved to West Vancouver in 1957. They had many family adventures, usually camping trips in the back roads of BC and western US. For many years, Robyn hosted Christmas cookie exchanges with her friends and helped with the planning of New Year’s costume

parties.

Robyn was an active volunteer most of her life. Her commitment to social justice and peace activism started in the 1960's when she joined the Canadian Voice of Women, promoting peace through education and advocacy, protesting the Vietnam War, nuclear proliferation, and war toys, as well as helping American draft dodgers settle in Canada. She was a founding member of the Vancouver Chapter of the Raging Grannies. For 30 years she wrote and performed songs with her fellow Grannies at many protest rallies and marches. Robyn was active in the UBC University Women's Club and also volunteered on many NDP campaigns both provinically and federally.

Robyn committed many years to the study of graphology, becoming a member of the American Handwriting Analysis Association in 1968 and later started a chapter of the group in BC. She offered professional analysis and taught night school classes for over two decades.

Robyn explored the world with friends, family and as part of her commitment to peace activism. She travelled extensively throughout North America including frequent visits to the Yukon where most of her family live. Adventures included a trip to Bali with her close friend Bev to celebrate their 80th birthdays, attending an international women's peace conference in Greece, riding an elephant in India when she was 86, and multiple trips to Europe.

Robyn leaves behind her sons Barney (Aileen) and Fraser (Cara), five grandchildren, Brodie, Angus, Merran, Alex, and Amanda and two great-grandchildren, Louis and Felix. Her husband, Dave, predeceased her in 2012.

The family wishes to extend their gratitude to the caring supportive staff at Hollyburn House and North Shore Hospice. No memorial is planned at this time.

Messages of Condolence

To Barney, Fraser and families,
I was a great friend of your parents, and would visit them at their house in West Van at least once a week, your dad and I would go for a walk down the railway tracks and your mother always had a snack for us when we returned.

It was through your dad that I joined both the Legion and the Aircrew Association, I was conscripted into the R.A.F.in 1946 as the last of the War Measures Act, and like your dad flew in Lancaster's (I was an instrument Technician.) His 60 missions was great even compared with others in Bomber command for which he received the D.F.C.

After your dad’s passing I tried to track down your mother, with no avail, but now at least I now know where she is, and mourn her passing with you!

I have met you both on different times, in fact my son stayed at your house Barney, when you were doing something with Indigenous peoples.

Once again I am saddened by your Mother Robin’s passing and share your grief! Your family meant a great deal to me! Ernie.

— Ernest Harrison

I am just one of many lives Robyn touched during her life. I have many fond memories of Sunday dinners at the Smith house chatting with Robyn in the kitchen, she always made me feel like family. Always opinionated, confident and committed, I marveled at everything she did. She was a feminist, activist and traditional mom who would help a friend, lead a protest and cook a moose roast all in a single day! A women ahead of her time, hers was a life well and fully lived. My heartfelt condolences to her family.

— ERIN HANRAHAN

Robyn, lived across the street and was my den mother as I grew up. She had a fulfilling and rich life and contributed so much. It does not feel to me that she is gone. Her spirit is very much alive. Sending deepest sympathy to her family.

— Maryanna Gabriel

Dear family. your mother was one of my most interesting neighbours at Highgate House! Her energy knew no bounds. Your wonderful tribute to her in the NS News reminded me of Robyn's various activist associations, in particular the Raging Grannies. For a gal born in a remote, small and often isolated BC town she lived a very large life. Thank you for the cheerful picture of Robyn with a "y". That is how I will remember her. Best wishes to everyone in this remarkable woman's family.

— Colleen Graham

An amazing woman with an incredible impact on many has finally found her peace. One of the last remaining residents of the then magical Crocodile Lane of my childhood. Robyn and Dave, Barney and Fraser were all a big part of my life. People you could go to when you needed a question answered (or an oil tank drained). There was always a pie of local picked berries on the windowsill or counter at the Smith residence, freshly baked by Robyn. The adult neighbours often got together for impromptu simple gatherings which made the lane so special. “Those were the days”…..fabulous neighbours and friends, making the most of everything. People aren’t like her anymore. It was a better time!
She will be remembered as she was!

— Tom Wagner

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https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/smith-robyn

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