



Mary Lou Smith

May 27, 1932 - March 4, 2012

Mary Lou (Samuelson) Smith 79, of Yreka

“In the arms of the angel, fly away from here.” An angel has passed from this earth. Mary Lou (Samuelson) Smith passed away Sunday night, March 4, 2012 from complications resulting from a stroke.

Mary Lou was born on May 27, 1932 in Quincy, Calif. to Edward and Ruth Samuelson. Her childhood years were spent in the communities of Mount Shasta, Prineville, Ore. and Marysville, Calif. From this experience of a family following a father’s employment in the lumber industry, she gained her values of hard work and preeminence of family. This was especially significant to her as Mary Lou was the “apple of her father’s eye.” Mary Lou had one sibling, her brother Ed Samuelson.

From Mary Lou’s first marriage, she was blessed with her daughters Laura Lee (Greenwood) Helsley and Diana Lorene (Greenwood) Gill. From this experience came her belief that each and every day carried its own blessing. As a single mom, she developed the strength of self-reliance. From her marriage of 30 years to Elmo Smith, she gained five children – Pete, Randy, Tyler, Christine and Barry Smith.

Mary Lou devoted her life to serving others. She was a successful business woman. She was a proud member and former president of Soroptimist International and took pride in the “I am special” program and its message of self-importance to young women. She was a member of the Siskiyou Cowbelles and was named “Cowbelle of the Year” in 1990. For 20 years, she

was a volunteer for the American Red Cross and served as treasurer, board member and manager of the local chapter.

Mary Lou was a part of the grand jury, the secret witness program, Madrone Hospice, Yreka Community Theater and League of California Cities. Her pinnacle of public service came when she was elected to the first of two terms on the Yreka City Council in 1986. She then became the first woman mayor for the city in 1990. It was from this position that she championed the causes of both people and projects as well as serving as a role model for other women to follow. Mary Lou received many awards and recognitions, but none which she was more proud of than her being named Yreka's "Citizen of the Year" in 1999.

Mary Lou was a devoted and loyal friend and cultivated her friendships from her high school days to her current circle of friends.

Mary Lou is survived by her brother Ed; her daughters Laurie and Diana; her sons-in-law Les Helsley and Doug Gill; her granddaughter Jasmine Donnally and her sons Gavin, River and August; her granddaughter Chelsea Bednarczyk, her husband Adam and their son James; her granddaughter Cerise Ralph, her husband Bradley and their daughter Charlotte; her grandsons Travis Winningham and Skyler Helsley; and her stepsons Tyler and Randy. A special person to Mary Lou was her niece Jesika Gavilanes and her family – Enrique and their children Eli and Anabelle. Mary Lou was predeceased by her parents, her husband Elmo and her stepchildren Pete, Christine and Barry.

Mary Lou nurtured and provided. She served as both mentor and role model. She will be missed by those whose lives she touched.

"You're in the arms of the angel and may you find some comfort here."

Services will be held at 2 p.m. on Monday, March 12, 2012 at the Yreka United Methodist Church, 502 N. Fairchild St. in Yreka. Donations may be made to Madrone Hospice or the Muscular Dystrophy Association.