



Norma Jane Holt

January 15, 1931 - March 6, 2026

Norma Jane (Johnson) (McMurry) Holt was one of our last fourth-generation Yreka residents. Her great grandfather, Charles Herzog, settled Butcher Hill in 1852 and opened Yreka's first meat market on Miner St. Her beloved grandfather, Albert Herzog, owned the Franco American Hotel and served as our mayor for most of his life. Norma Jane was born January 15, 1931, in Yreka to Margaret "Aldeane" Herzog and Eric Johnson, and grew up in the yellow ranch house (with the cypress trees) at the North Yreka I-5 interchange. Norma Jane couldn't sing, draw, or sew, but she drove cattle with the ranch hands, learned to drive in the hay truck, and rode her horse "Flash" through the mountains and riverbeds of Siskiyou County. She was an excellent musician, playing the piano and organ in St. Mark's Episcopal Church, and sitting first chair clarinet in the high school band. She was also Yreka High School's class of 1948 graduating valedictorian.

Norma Jane attended the University of California, Berkeley, majoring in English. She lived in the Sigma Cappa Sorority House, acting as its treasurer. She had a soft spot for the girls who snuck in post-curfew after a date, and often flipped quarters with them to avoid their late fees.

After graduation, the local grammar school principal tried to convince Norma Jane that she would make an excellent teacher. She didn't believe him, but took the job - and a miracle happened: Norma Jane discovered she LOVED the kids! Not much older than her seventh and eighth graders, they became fast friends. Early in the first year, "Miss Johnson" opened her desk and found

a snake! Little did the pranksters know that she loved serpents. She draped the creature around her neck and visited the desks of each suspected perpetrator, letting the viper dangle down over their reading materials.

Following the incident, no discipline issues ever occurred in her classrooms. She taught and coached the girls' softball teams in the Weed and Yreka grammar schools for several years, until she entered into matrimony.

Alan "A. J." McMurry (with the cigar) was a life-long Yreka resident who had returned from World War II to start a successful construction business. He and Norma Jane were married in 1955, and brought into the world Lisa (in 1956) and John (in 1960). During their lives together in the home Alan built at the top of Park Place, Norma Jane acted as the office manager for the A. J. McMurry Co., headquartered in what is now Ming's Restaurant on Miner St. Together they built a number of public works, including college buildings in Susanville and Weed, the former Yreka Safeway building, the old and new Casa Ramos buildings, and the Siskiyou County Library, Yreka branch. Norma Jane provided support for Alan's extensive community service efforts, organizing Rotary Club and Elks Lodge functions. Also finding time for herself, she played tennis at the City Park with friends, and ran the local duplicate bridge club, becoming Siskiyou County's first Duplicate Bridge Life Master.

Lisa (the author of this tribute) cannot imagine having a better mom than Norma Jane. She was beautiful, energetic, and the organizer of fabulous theme birthday parties and huge neighborhood gatherings featuring croquette and card games, which she always won. She took us kids on hikes up Butcher Hill and Humbug; sometimes we ate lunch in a tree. She was the first to volunteer as a chaperone for our high school trips, showing us the fancier sides of San Francisco. She was a role model for optimism, fashion (including miniskirts and big colorful jewelry!), and never being afraid to show your strengths, even if you were a girl.

When the heartbreak of an empty nest overcame her, the marriage to Alan came to an end. In later years she married George "Bill" Holt, a fellow bridge fan, whose family has been dear to Norma Jane.

One of the great joys of Norma Jane's life was her grandchildren, Kenneth "Kacy" Ruth, Jr. (Tammy) and Cory Ruth (Estevan Vigil). At every chance, Norma Jane drove to Sacramento to play games, have birthday parties, and travel with them; she loved them with all her heart. They recently blessed her with adorable great-grandchildren, Kacy's three in Nashville, TN, and Cory's three in Jacksonville, OR.

Norma Jane's glass was always more than half full. She emulated Pollyanna's spirit of gladness without being naïve. She was patient and kind, and she always knew - and convinced those she loved of the same - that "everything will be okay".

After a full life, she passed peacefully at our beautiful Madrone Hospice House on March 6, 2026. She was preceded in death by her beloved sister Darlene (Johnson) O'Leary, her dear friend Carolyn "Puddy" Weber, both of her husbands, and many other Yreka classmates and friends. She is survived by her daughter and best friend, Lisa McMurry Nixon, and Lisa's husband John Nixon, who Norma Jane adored, as well as by son John McMurry (Kristi), four grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews on Darlene's, A. J.'s and Bill's sides. Norma Jane's exemplary spirit will live in all of us.

A private burial is planned, with a celebration of life at a future date. In lieu of flowers, donations would be appreciated to Madrone Hospice House (<https://www.madronehospice.org/>) and/or Youth Empowerment Siskiyou (<https://yesiskiyou.org/>).

Tribute Wall

DC

“ Bless you and your Family, Lisa,...Always enjoyed Norma...she was a kind happy go lucky personality. Good Gal everyone enjoyed her presence..HUG..GREAT MEMORIES XOXO

Doris Callison - April 12 at 12:00 AM

AM

“ She was so good to our family. We would house sit and I loved her bright blue and green room. She was a great friend to my grandparents and shared the first and middle name of my grandma. May you rest in peace and get to play bridge again with them!

Amanda Morman - March 25 at 12:00 AM

TH

“ Oh my gosh! I remember Norma as my vastly superior tennis partner, always dressed and coiffed to the nines, but not coming close to the beautiful person she was inside. Now she's young again, playing cards, tennis, and golf, and watching over the people she loves. I'm so sorry for your loss, Lisa, but what wonderful memories you have to keep with you. Hugs!

Tony Houston - March 11 at 12:00 AM

SW

“ So very sorry to hear this. My brother (Mike Hogan) was a friend of John's years ago. Your Mom was so very sweet. My condolences from my family to yours.

Sandi Wood - March 11 at 12:00 AM

JF

“ So sorry to hear about your mother's passing. She was always friendly and pleasant when I saw her. Having been raised up on the hill that Herzog developed, and not knowing the history made what you wrote, really interesting. My thoughts are with all of you. Judy L Foster..

Judy L Foster - March 11 at 12:00 AM

SF

“ What an amazing life and beautiful tribute Lisa! You were so very blessed 🙏🏻 deepest condolences to you and your families.

Susana J. Fox-Sponsler - March 10 at 12:00 AM

TS

“ Oh Lisa, my friend. So sorry. Love and hugs. ❤️

Tracy Samuelson - March 10 at 12:00 AM

PJ

“ Prayerfully remembering you Lisa and your family 🙏🏻

Pam Johnson - March 10 at 12:00 AM

JB

“ She is the last of all.my teacher at Weed..8th grade history. 🙏🏻🙏🏻

Joe Belcastro - March 10 at 12:00 AM

DS

“ Prayers and condolences to your entire family.

Dave Seeley - March 09 at 12:00 AM

MC

“ *She was a lovely lady!!! Thinking of you Lisa and family*

Marsha Chambers - March 09 at 12:00 AM

RO

“ *Oh, dearest Lisa. I have such fond memories of your mom. I always enjoy a chance to visit with her in later years. I do know that she was so very proud of you. Whenever I'd see her somewhere, she'd tell me what you had been up to. Please let me know if there's anything I can do to help.*

Rory - March 09 at 12:00 AM

MR

“ *oh my sweet lovely norma ☐❤ how i loved her so much! she will be missed very deeply! Condolences to her family.*

Maricela Rodriguez - March 09 at 12:00 AM

AL

“ *Every girl should have just such a loving relationship with their mom. "The Chicks" shared the wondrous blessing of Norma Jane's insight, wisdom, humor and slight naughtiness. We will all miss her so much.*

Allison Leal - March 09 at 12:00 AM

CO

“ *What a lovely tribute to your mom. She was a treasure. May your love and memories sustain you during this time and in the future. ❤*

Catherine Olivolo - March 09 at 12:00 AM

CM

“ Thoughts and sincere condolences to the McMurry and Nixon families during this difficult time and the loss of an extraordinary woman 🙏💔

Corey Middleton - March 09 at 12:00 AM

SG

“ ❤️😊

Sherry Glendenning - March 09 at 12:00 AM

CM

“ So sorry to hear this. She was a great lady, and will be missed by many. My thoughts and prayers are with you Lisa and the family.

Cheryl Miller - March 09 at 12:00 AM

LC

“ So sorry to hear this. Sending loving thoughts to John and Lisa and their families.

Lori Carlson - March 09 at 12:00 AM

HB

“ So sorry to hear of Normas' passing. She was a good customer and friend for many years. My thoughts a prayers are with your family.

Helen Blackston - March 09 at 12:00 AM

DT

“ ❤️❤️ Lisa and family

Donna Kleaver Thompson - March 09 at 12:00 AM

AH

“ *We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ Girdner Funeral Chapel*

A Memorial Tree was planted for Norma Jane Holt - March 09 at 12:00 AM