



Marian Norda Murdock

January 26, 1929 - June 26, 2018

Norda Murdock, our beloved mother, grandmother and great-grandmother passed away on Tuesday, June 26th surrounded by family at her home in Newberg. Born Marian Roberta Lee Smith on January 26th, 1929 in Portland, Oregon, she was the youngest of four children, the others being Darlene, Lyle, and Lowell. Her parents were Bert, a street car operator at the time, and Ethel (nee Etchison), a homemaker who had moved to Oregon from Nebraska. Norda (whose nickname was bestowed upon her by her brothers as a baby) grew up in Portland and Astoria. She attended Star of the Sea Catholic High School in Astoria and was one of a graduating class of eight in 1947. All through her life she kept a close bond with her fellow graduates, especially Sugar, Sue, Jack, Frank, Pat, and Bob. Their annual high school reunions at Cannon Beach were a highlight of Norda's later years.

In the fall of 1950, Norda was working for the phone company when she met a dashing young sailor at a dance. His name was Robert Gordon Murdock and they soon fell in love. Apparently, mother Ethel had her doubts at first about the boy from Eugene, so the young couple eloped across the river in Washington State. Soon after, the children started to arrive on a regular basis - Michael, Patrick, Molly, David, Mary, and Scott – and Bob and Norda's love for each other remained strong over the course of four decades.

The growing family moved from town to town across the Northwest eventually

settling in Tigard when it was still a landscape of fields, creeks, and forests. Norda was a full-time homemaker for the household of eight plus several dogs, cats and horses but nevertheless found time to play bridge, make music with the Carillon Singers, and experiment with various hairdos. The family attended St. Anthony's Church and summers were full of Little League and Babe Ruth baseball.

Once her youngest child entered school, Norda earned her real estate license and began working as an agent, a job she enjoyed for several years and one that made her a well-known figure all across Washington County.

In 1973, Norda and Bob moved to Sherwood and built a 25-acre horse farm on Chehalem Mountain. For over ten years, they ran the Murdock Arabians breeding stables with the help of Molly, Mary, Pat and Scott. The Murdock horses won many prizes in the US and Canada and the horse world provided them with some of their most enduring friends and fondest memories.

Their time on the farm was cut short when Bob was diagnosed with cancer. After a year-long fight, he passed away in February, 1986. Norda lived an independent life for 30 years following dad's death. She travelled to such places as Alaska, Japan, New York, and Boston and worked a number of jobs including donation coordinator for Raphael House, a safe shelter for battered women. She also took up painting and created many fine landscapes and seascapes – often presenting them as gifts to her family.

Norda loved the farms and fields of the Tualatin Valley and felt a deep connection to its rural landscape. For the last eight years, she lived at Astor House in Newberg where she cultivated a devoted following of sparrows and hummingbirds on her second-floor balcony. She never tired of seeing them come and go and watching the evening sunlight glow on the tree-covered hills in the distance.

A lively and well-loved presence at Astor House, Norda was a star player on the bean-bag baseball team, a founding member of the bridge club, and host of Norda's "At 4 We Pour" happy hour. She was cherished by all for her warmth and sense of humor and also developed a reputation as a poet – composing many memorable verses for various occasions – eventually collecting them into a book she titled with characteristic wit, Geriatric Gingles.

Norda loved having her children and grandchildren stop by. Opening the door, we would often find her watching sports on tv, vigorously cheering on her Blazers, Mariners, Seahawks, Beavers and Ducks (sorry Scott!). A devout Catholic, she was a parishioner of both St. Francis Church in Sherwood and St. Peter's in Newberg. She could be found many a Sunday after mass at Clancy's Pub in Sherwood enjoying Irish coffee and laughter with her daughter Mary and dear friends Madeleine and Joanne.

Norda is survived by her six children, four in-laws, 11 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. We miss her now and will miss her always. Her remains will be interred for eternity alongside her beloved husband Bob in Portland's Willamette National Cemetery.

The memorial service will be at St Peter Catholic Church in Newberg on September 11, 2018 at 11:00 AM. We have chosen that date in order to give Norda's children and grandchildren the chance to make travel plans for attending the memorial mass. There will be a reception following at the church.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory can be made to Mercy Corps, a Portland-based humanitarian group Norda supported. Thank you.

Cemetery Details

Willamette National Cemetery

11800 SE Mt. Scott Blvd.
Portland, OR 97086

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

AUG 11. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (PT)

St. Peter Catholic Church
2315 N. Main Street
Newberg, OR 97132

Tribute Wall

CM

“ This morning, I stopped by to visit my favorite elder and neighbor, Carol Bozanich Winjum in Brinnon, Washington. Carol had a copy of Geriatric Gingles on her coffee table which I picked up and began to read to Carol. Although her memory is not what it once was, she has such fond memories of Aunt Norda. Carol remembered each of her cousins' names and even the dog's name. Mostly she remembered the love and laughter she shared with Norda. I am anxious to share this page with her even though she will be sad that Norda is gone, Carol will love hearing your story of her life.

Chris Messmer - November 18, 2025 at 06:56 PM

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David Murdock - July 19, 2018 at 01:39 PM