



Roberta Cleone Simonsen

October 18, 1936 - February 24, 2024

Heaven welcomed a new angel on February 24 as Roberta Cleone Simonsen peacefully passed away in Newberg at the age of 87. Despite declining health over the last few years, she spent her last days as she did her complete adult life: entertaining family and friends with a beautiful smile and an offer to provide them something to eat or drink.

Roberta was the oldest child born in her grandmother's home to Elva Ilene and Freeman Fee ("Mose") Wells in the Black Hills of Lead, South Dakota. She was followed shortly by sister Kay, brother David, and a few years later by sister Sharon. The young family left South Dakota in search of steady work for Mose, living a few years in California and eventually finding their way to Lynx Hollow Road near Creswell, Oregon. She was a young 14-year-old and soon met an upperclassman named Ray. The families became good friends, spending weekend nights playing Pinochle and Spoons. Roberta and Ray attended Cottage Grove High School together but when Ray graduated, he moved on for a year at Linfield College. He then joined the army and was shipped off to Texas. While there, Ray was afraid he might "lose Roberta to someone else." He came home for Christmas break of her senior year and proposed. She said "yes!" The young couple married in September of 1954 during his next break from the Army and spent 64 years happily married. Their love was a beautiful role model for their family. Ray still called her his "girlfriend" when he passed away in 2017.

Late in 1955, after Ray's separation from the Army they moved back to Lane County and their first daughter, Pamela, was born. Roberta was a young and determined mother of 19. When Pam was a toddler, they decided it was time for Ray to return to Linfield and continue his education while playing football. The Korean War was over and there were many young couples at Linfield taking advantage of their GI educational benefits. The family of three moved into the GI apartments off the end of the Linfield football field where they met many other young couples who remained lifelong friends. Roberta helped put Ray through college working at the Dairy Queen and later wrapping meat for local grocery stores. Late in 1959, they welcomed their second daughter, Annette.

Following Ray's graduation the family remained in Yamhill County living in Newberg, Sheridan, McMinnville and finally Dundee. Once both daughters were in grade school, Ray and Roberta decided it was time for Roberta to go to college at Linfield. She completed her teaching degree in four years, earning an honor's degree in Home Economics Education and later completed her Master's degree. Roberta was a strong role model for her daughters and grandchildren on how to be a successful working Mom. She was a member of PEO, an organization providing scholarships for higher education in women. She worked 24 years at McMinnville High School teaching sewing, home interior, nutrition, child development and her greatest passion, cooking. Roberta was a fabulous foods teacher. Her classes were popular and she was proud of the fact that her classes were always full. She especially enjoyed that most of her students were boys. She always laughed that they took her classes because they were able to eat what they made!

Roberta had many interests. She and Ray loved traveling and took many trips with family and with friends to Hawaii, Europe, and the Caribbean. She loved entertaining and everyone felt welcome in her home. She was well known for her fabulous entertaining abilities, her beautifully decorated home and her wonderful home-cooked meals. No one left her home hungry. Her potato salad was a crowd favorite, and she made the best chicken and dumplings in the country. Roberta decorated for every holiday and the grandkids joked she even had decorations for Arbor Day. She loved shopping for these decorations almost as much as she loved decorating the house. The grandchildren and great-grandchildren all have different decorations from Grandma/Great Grandma that they will cherish as special memories of her.

Roberta's faith was very important to her. She was a faithful member of the Newberg First Presbyterian Church until her health kept her from attending. She was a Deacon and an Elder and served in every volunteer capacity of the church. She organized and hosted many auctions, Easter Breakfasts, teas and luncheons. Roberta served as wedding coordinator for the church and faithfully sang in the choir for many years.

Roberta and Ray were members of an extended group of friends that together played Bridge, traveled, danced (Dandy Dancers) and entertained. Jokingly, over the years, the Dandy Dancers said they became an eating club since dancing had become more difficult. Many of these friends still met weekly together at a local pizza parlor until COVID put an end to the gatherings. Their friendships were deep and lasting. They provided their children and grandchildren with an unbelievable legacy that is unmatched.

Family was everything to Roberta. She was an encourager and a teacher with all her family. In her last days, she continued to say, "I am the luckiest person in the whole world"

when her family and friends came to visit. Roberta and Ray created a legacy that will live on in the memories of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren.

Roberta is preceded in death by the love of her life, Ray, her parents and her sister Kay. She is survived by brother David of Florence and sister Sharon of Lafayette. She is also survived by daughter Pamela Weaver, (Tim), daughter Annette Watson, (Chuck), grandchildren Rebecca Weaver (Sean), Bethany Hawley (Tylor), Kyle Simonsen, Ashley Owen (Joshua), Jeremy Weaver (Jody) and Megan Weaver. Also surviving are ten great grandchildren: Brooke, Raymond, Olivia, Ryann, Indira, Hayes, Jensyn, Sutton, Sawyer and Finnley. They are all individually mentioned because she made such an impact on their lives, and they, on hers. She is survived by many nieces, nephews and friends who loved her.

A celebration of life will be held at Newberg First Presbyterian Church, 501 Mission Drive on Saturday, May 11 at 2:00.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to McMinnville High School Bear Hugs Child Development Center. Roberta was the co-author of the original grant for this program that provides child development training to high school students and student parents as well as childcare for community children, children of teen parents and staff. The grant was written in 1992 and this highly successful program is still going strong. It meant a great deal to Roberta. Her daughter, "Teacher Annette" was a mainstay in the program for nearly 30 years until her recent retirement. You may send your donation in honor of Roberta Simonsen to: Bear Hugs Child Development Center ATTN Tracy Brandt, McMinnville High School, 615 NE 15th St., McMinnville OR.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

MAY 11. 2:00 PM (PT)

First Presbyterian Church
501 Mission Dr.
Newberg, OR 97132
<https://newbergfpc.org/>