



## Ellen Smedley Smith

December 7, 1914 - March 18, 2021

Ellen Smedley Smith, born December 7, 1914 in Denver, Colorado, passed away March 18, 2021, in Fayetteville, Arkansas. She was the third child of Victor Clyde and Anne Wheeler Smedley. At age 106, she had outlived all of her five brothers and sisters, as well as her husband, James L. Smith, Jr., who died in 1993. She is survived by her daughter, Sarah Anne Myers and husband William D. (Dan) of Fayetteville, AR, her son James L. Smith, III and wife Sandra of Athens, GA and her sister-in-law, Phoebe Smedley of Denver, CO. She was blessed with five grandchildren, three step grandchildren, twelve great grandchildren and many beloved nieces, nephews and friends.

Ellen's grandfather, William Smedley, was a Quaker from Pennsylvania who established a dental practice in Denver in 1870. Her father and two uncles also became dentists and joined her grandfather to start the Smedley Dental Clinic in Denver. As a child during the 1920s, Ellen developed a love of nature and the outdoors during summers with her siblings and cousins at the families' mountain cabin in Estes Park, while her father or one of her uncles worked as a dentist in an adjacent cabin. Later the dental office became the Clyde Smedley cabin, and Ellen and her family have been returning there each summer for years.

Ellen studied humanities and world culture at Scripps College in Claremont, California for two years, and in 1936 graduated from the University of Colorado in Boulder, where she was a member of the Delta Gamma sorority. It was there she met her husband-to-be, Jim, and they were married in Denver in 1937. They lived in Dallas and Ft. Worth, Texas for several years, and it was during those years that their children, Sarah and Jimmy, were born.

During World War II, as Jim served in Europe, Ellen and the children split their time between her parents in Denver and his in Baxter Springs, Kansas, returning to the family cabin in Estes Park during the summer months. After the war, Ellen and Jim decided to settle in Fayetteville, Arkansas, where Ellen worked with Welcome Wagon, greeting newcomers to Fayetteville, and became active in the PTA, serving one year as President

of the Washington School PTA. She was also a founder and 70-year member of her PEO Chapter, and a long-time member of the Perennial Garden Club in Fayetteville. Ellen and Jim enjoyed playing golf at Fayetteville Country Club, and her love of the game continued for the rest of her life. In 2014, this passion caught the attention of the Golf Channel, where she was featured in a segment called “Ellen Smith, 100 Year-old Golfer” (<https://www.golfchannel.com/video/ellen-smith-100-year-old-golfer>)

After their children went to college, Ellen and Jim travelled frequently, making new friends all around the world. They especially enjoyed trips focusing on nature and wildlife, including birds, and exploring National Parks in the West. After Jim’s death in 1993, Ellen’s generous and adventurous spirit led her to pursuits like volunteering for Meals on Wheels and traveling to China with a group from the University of Arkansas. She continued to gather with family each summer in Estes Park, enjoying hikes and even whitewater rafting with her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. She often travelled with her old friend, Phil Prescott of San Jose, California, and they enjoyed life together in their 80s and 90s.

Ellen was a great fan and supporter of the University of Arkansas Razorbacks football and basketball teams, the Walton Arts Center, Wilson Park, the Fayetteville Public Library, and the Crystal Bridges Museum. She had an active spiritual life, starting each day with meditation and prayers, and was a long-time, engaged member of the First United Presbyterian Church. As her long life continued, she lost many of her earliest friends and family, but she continued to make and cherish new and younger friends from all walks of life, many of whom were the children and grandchildren of friends in her own generation. She nurtured these connections around the world with her great skills as a note-writer and communicator.

After back surgery at age 97, Ellen gave up driving and accepted caregivers in her home who became like family and enabled her to continue her Fayetteville activities and annual trips to Colorado. She showed great determination, and after a few months of rehabilitation resumed playing golf and enjoying daily walks in her neighborhood’s Wilson Park.

When asked the secret of her long and productive life, Ellen said “Live with Gratitude.” At her 100th birthday celebration, she summed up her approach to life with this Hindu proverb: “The winds of Grace are always blowing; we just have to put up our sails.” She was a positive, loving and faithful person, always looking forward to the next exciting event or chance to be with friends and family. With Ellen’s passing, Fayetteville and many friends and family elsewhere have lost a beloved icon, who will always be remembered and will surely be missed. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to one of Ellen’s favorite causes, the First United Presbyterian Church in Fayetteville (<https://www.fupcfay.org/>) or the Fayetteville Public Library (<https://www.faylib.org/>).



# Comments

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“ I am very tardy in expressing my love and friendship. She and Jim were very close to my parent's Grover and Bettie Thomas, and I grew up knowing them well. My parents loved to entertain, and Jim and Ellen were often guests, first on Ranch Drive, and later on Fairway Lane. She and Feriba were often In Mom's golfing group. The Fayetteville Country Club was really a great place for children in the 50's and 60's, for everyone knew whose child you were, and we were given a lot of freedoms to just be kids! During that time, the bar was one of the only air conditioned places, and although kids were technically not allowed, we would peek in and see if there was someone who might let us in for a bit. Ellen was always one that would motion for me to come sit with her, and she happily ordered me a Shirley Temple! She would also give me a hand full of change to play on the one and only slot machine!!Of course I absolutely adored her! How could you not??? My Daddy died in 1997, at Henry Shreve's funeral, which is a totally amazing story, and Mom followed him greatfully in 2007. I was an only child and had always been around older people. With no family but my wonderful daughter, I loved to visit with the people who had known and loved my parents, and Ellen was at the top of the list.We had many chats sitting in her bedroom, enjoying good conversation and a glass of wine. Sara and Jim, thank you for sharing your very special Mother with all of us! She was a light in the darkness. Her love of life was contagious to everyone she knew, and what a blessing it was to call her friend!



Anne C Thomas - November 11, 2021 at 12:29 AM

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“ Ever since we learned of Ellen's death, her many friends at Fayetteville Country Club--and in particular in the women's golf group--have been sharing recollections of Ellen. Her chronically positive attitude was a joy for us all. Her birthday was close to when our group would have our annual Christmas party and thus we were able to celebrate her on a regular basis as she continued to be with us long after she had curtailed her organized golfing activity. Pre-virus we could grab a few minutes with her on many Wednesdays when she would be lunching in the Club with other no-longer golfers. The video from the Golf Channel of her 100th birthday golf lesson with Bill is just priceless and so characteristic of Ellen.

Rita Miller

Rita G Miller - April 17, 2021 at 12:35 PM

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“ What a joy to read all these memories here of dear Ellen, whom we forever called Mrs. Smith. To her amazing children, grandchildren and all the families they've made: You have our hearts as in this time of her leavetaking. We were introduced to her when we met in a bar in Montana where Mark was completing his studies in creative writing. When we moved to Fayetteville she became our friend and adopted godmother, and she remained so even after we left. Here's how I once described her in a piece of writing following her 100th birthday. I hope it evokes her always-vivid self:

Imagine the tiniest woman you know. Add impossible optimism, verve, and generosity. So that she's not all rainbows and unicorns, give her two fingers of bourbon and an Irish wink. When the Razorbacks kick off, get out of the way. Make her a widow who still misses him three decades later. Put her through spinal surgery and rehab—in her late nineties. Know that when she says, 'Bless your heart,' she means it.

When we joined Ellen's family and friends for the first of the centennial celebrations – the devouring of smoked pig – Ellen took Sheri's hand, and I knew Sheri would happily hold on all night. When we had lived in Fayetteville, Ellen—then in her eighties—had hiked with us through woods, mulled the mint for our first Derby juleps, taken us to her church, joined us for concerts and football games, and enwrapped us with warmth and a moment-by-moment delight in the world—which she did for many people. Since then, we've wanted to be like her, and know we aren't always, and try anyway.

Michael Downs, with Sheri Venema - April 06, 2021 at 08:26 PM

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“ May your many wonderful memories of Ellen bring you comfort now and for the future. She was a most remarkable woman--she showed everyone how life should be lived--with kindness, compassion and selflessness.  
We know you will all miss her terribly, but her inspirational spirit will live on in all of you, and she will be in your hearts forever.  
With sadness and love,  
Pat & Michael

Patricia Porter - March 22, 2021 at 09:12 AM

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“ My husband Jon and I were so honored to have been able to share Ellen's 100th birthday with her. What an amazing woman - full of spirit, a blessing to her community and greatly loved by her family. She will be missed. Deborah Hunter

DEBORAH HUNTER - March 22, 2021 at 08:36 AM

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“ Ellen always had a bright smile on her face. A true inspiration. My love and sympathy to Sarah and family.  
Helen Graham Lewis

HELEN LEWIS - March 21, 2021 at 11:57 AM

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“ My wife and I organized a church trip shortly after we moved to Fayetteville in 1996. We spent the night at White Rock and planned to float the mulberry river the next morning. There were about 15 people in the group.

It rained the night before so the water was really flowing and we thought of abandoning the float for safety reasons. Ellen at over 80 wanted to go and my wife really didn't want to go so she and got in the canoe together.

It was one of my favorite memories of Ellen. She was a wonderful spirit. I love the quote in her obituary. "The grace of God Is always flowing we just need to put up our sails".

I am glad we have the Ellen Smith birthday fund named in her honor at our church. Every birthday members celebrate are asked to make a donation of their age to the fund.

Ted Belden - March 21, 2021 at 10:51 AM



“ This is Allen Wood, one of Ellen’s personal caregivers for the last nine years. Ellen was the radiance of gratitude love and compassion. Ellen taught me so many spiritual things. For example, out on the golf course one day, I told her Ellen be careful of the sand traps out there. Ellen said NO! You have got to get your thinking right. You never think about that Sandtrap. No! You only think about where you gonna put that ball! I realized at that moment, that we can apply that principle in every aspect of our lives. Ellen always had her thinking right. Every morning when I would come in to help Ellen get up for the day. She would look at me and smile and say how grateful she was that I was there with her. She did this for all of his caregivers. Then she would go over to have her quiet time. She would swivel her little red chair around, so she could look out over her garden and watch the birds at the feeder’s. I would watch her often while she was in quiet time. Reading her spiritual material, journaling, praying and just smiling at all the birds the plants and the sky, thinking thoughts of joy and gratitude. She showed love, and sent positive through out to the Universe every day. Always with gratitude. When I tucked her into bed at night, she always told me how grateful she was for me. Yes Ellen always had her thinking right both in her mind and heart. Always radiating love and caring thoughts to everyone in her life around around the world.

There’s never been one like Ellen. God bless you Ellen! I’m so happy that you’re in such a good place now reaping the benefits of all the love that you have given and shared.

**Allen Wood** - March 21, 2021 at 12:16 AM

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“ Ellen was a 75 year member of The Perennial Garden Club. She was loved by each and every member. Her love of nature became contagious when one was around her. She will be missed.

**karen mcdonald** - March 20, 2021 at 07:52 PM

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“ I will miss our times in the evenings watching Little House On The Prairie.  
<https://youtu.be/UR4T0av0o40> Love always Freda

**Freda Baschab** - March 20, 2021 at 07:44 PM

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“ Such an inspirational woman - Fayetteville Country Club will certainly miss her spirit and smiling face!

**kathy okelley** - March 20, 2021 at 05:27 PM

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“ The best neighbor ever. Ellen always asked about our children, and cared about us. She gave us little gifts, and saved clippings and notices that she knew would interest us. We loved seeing her on our block, and at Wilson Park. Her Colorado roots were a great source of pride to her, as well as to us, especially since our kids ended up in Colorado. What a wonderful person she was! - Daniel and Judith

**D and J Levine** - March 20, 2021 at 03:17 PM

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“ Ellen was special and kind. She always had a smile on her face and a positive attitude.  
She and Jim moved to Fayetteville with their two adorable children and lived across the street from me. I have many wonderful memories of this lovely lady.

**Rebecca Wasson** - March 20, 2021 at 01:23 PM

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“ I love Ellen. She was one of my last golfing partners. She was a great golfer and I enjoyed playing with her and Ferba. Ellen was always smiling. She would stop by after visiting Ferba if I was out in the yard. ( we live around the corner from Ferba ) She was quite a lady!! She will be missed!!

**Vicki Jones** - March 20, 2021 at 10:52 AM

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“ This is Steve, one of “Mrs. Ellen’s” physical therapy/rehab team. I am the one who was working with Mrs. Ellen, after her back surgery, at age 97! I’ve never had a patient more motivated or worked harder. We would take the golf club outside and she would work on her golf swing. She wanted to hit a real golf ball...I told(kindly suggested, that we not use a real ball). I told her, she would knock out a window of a building across the street and that would cost me \$\$! We had a big laugh out of that. But Mrs Ellen got her way. She brought a special ball that would only go 10-20 yards, regardless how hard it was hit. So she and I spent several sessions regaining her range of motion and swing. Never a better student(actualy she was teaching me). And my physical therapy intern spent several days chasing the ball for us. There will never be another one like Mrs. Ellen. Greatly loved and greatly missed!

Steve Flory

**Steve Flory** - March 20, 2021 at 10:26 AM

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“ Ellen was such an inspiration to me. I so enjoyed the brief time I was able to play golf with her. She was always so upbeat and made everyone feel good around her.

**Wilma Bonds** - March 20, 2021 at 07:53 AM



“ Such a sweet, gracious lady. When she was still able to come in to Collier's, we always visited and she loved telling people that we were "old" friends. After she no longer came in person, I often talked with her on the phone about her account or to order meds and she was still thrilled to talk about "old" times. I will certainly miss her kindness and positive attitude.

**Linda Maeder Howard** - March 23, 2021 at 09:32 AM



“ First allow me to say I'm so sorry for your loss. I was shocked to read the obituary and find out Ms. Smith's age--no way would I have ever believed she was 106. I first got acquainted w/Ms. Smith when I started at WelcomeHealth. She had donated in the past, and I wanted to find out why and get to know her. She was so gracious on the phone w/me, and I felt as if I had known her forever. The next year, we did an event to honor Dr. Jackson, and as his neighbor, she was certain she wanted to contribute. I went to her house to deliver a gift and have had several cherished phone calls w/her over the years. One time I recall her caregiver being like a gatekeeper (which I understand and appreciate), but she called me back to chat. She was a doll, and I'm bless I met her!

**Brittney** - April 01, 2021 at 04:52 PM



“ Aunt Ellen's enthusiasm always made each person feel special. As a teenager, I never met anyone who always seemed so excited to see me. I was thinking of her just recently and am sorry to learn she has passed but happy to know she is now cheering heaven on.

**John Putnam** - May 09, 2021 at 10:15 PM