

Obituary for Harriet Ellen Rittenour Smith



3/23/1920 - 3/22/2016

Harriett Ellen Rittenour Smith, mother, teacher and community volunteer, died Tuesday, March 22nd, a day before her 96th birthday after a half century in central Ohio. Born on a farm near Picketon, Ohio in 1920, the same year that women won the right to vote in the nation she cherished, Harriett grew up in Pike County and Chillicothe, where she attended high school.

Introduced by a cousin to her husband-to-be while a third-generation freshman at Ohio Wesleyan University, she graduated in 1942, and was married to Alan Bronson Smith, Jr., a man who wanted to fly. He went to pilot training for the Army Air Corps, and very quickly went to war, eventually commanding a “Superfortress” in the first B-29 raid on Japan.

She taught high school English in Chillicothe and bore a son named for his gallant father while waiting out the war. When it finally ended, she moved to Ravenna, Ohio to raise chickens and a precious new daughter.

The Air Force was created in 1947, and Harriett moved around the world with her family to Kansas, Alabama, Florida, Virginia, Texas, California, Rhode Island, Bolivia, and ultimately Japan. One of the few constants in her life were summers in Bay View, Michigan. She created interest, history and home life for her family, bore her second son in Alabama who would fly faster than his father, and her third son in Bolivia who would excel at television news. She volunteered, taught, and opened her home to those far from theirs. She put on the Red Cross uniform, and welcomed home wounded soldiers and sailors as they disembarked.

Harriett hand-restored a town home in German Village during 1980-83 and in 1988 she and her husband returned to Chillicothe to revitalize a historic building at the center of town – the Carlisle Building. The Happy Harvester Restaurant was created, and provided live music on weekends and many happy dinner hours for Chillicothe residents.

Harriett was an active member of many organizations, including Sorosis, Zonta International, P.E.O., Girl Scouts and the American Red Cross. She was a member of numerous Methodist churches around the world, including Bexley United Methodist locally, where she taught Vacation Bible School and Sunday School. Harriett painted throughout her adult life, and was in

the process of self-publishing a book with her illustrations in collaboration with the staff at Wesley Ridge, her last residence.