

Elsbeth Ann Mauk Herron Groff-Smith, 1928-2018

Ann, aka Mauk Mammal, Squirrel, Mom, Aunt(ie) Ann, and Gammy, died peacefully on November 3, 2018 in Bellingham, WA, where she lived after moving from the Seattle area with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease.

Born Elsbeth Ann Mauk to parents John and Betty Mauk in Seattle, WA on April 30, 1928, she was the oldest of three children. Ann spent her early life in Madrona, through the Depression and War years, learning how to become the packrat she (notoriously) later became. The St. Nicholas School prepared her for her longest hiatus from the Seattle area when she spent 4 years at Smith College (class of 1950) in Northampton, MA, and made lifelong friends.

Ann married Stephen Herron in 1951. They moved to Bellevue, where she lived for the next 60 years and where they built a home and a family who shared countless memorable times, like being awakened many mornings to a loud, off-tune version of Oklahoma's "Oh What a Beautiful Morning" (she was famously tone-deaf, but endearing); appreciating and learning about boating and navigating the open water on the "Lumberjack," that beautiful Chris Craft; opening Ann's lovingly-handmade Christmas stockings in front of the fire; and experiencing innumerable family vacations from the mountains to the ocean. They had many years of fulfilling and cherished time with Mauk and Herron family and friends near and far. After Steve's death in 1995, she married Geoffrey Groff-Smith in 1999, and they shared many loving years including much travel and many dog walks.

In spite of her several name changes, Ann never lost her identity as a mother, provider, craft artist, and gardener. As a mother and grandmother, she incorporated artistic and horticultural interests into the activities of most of her days. Expressed in myriad homemade costumes, indoor (terrariums!) and outdoor garden projects, and craft projects (macramé anyone?), her desire to create things was a constant theme in her household. Ann had a playful spirit and could often be found at a Gin Rummy match or pulling some puzzle or game out of her overflowing game cabinet, which kids, big and small, always had fun exploring.

In the kitchen her grandchildren clamored for her wonderful oven pancakes and for her blue cheese “Gammy Dip,” and she was renowned for her amazing cookie collection served at her annual December holiday party (aka “The Sherry Party”). She was an early adopter of the natural-food movement, making her own bread from her own starter for years. She otherwise only occasionally strayed from traditional all-American cookery, her most memorable concoction being her legendary brandied Christmas pudding that lasted for about 18 years without refrigeration!

Ann loved many dogs over her lifetime: Wendy, Duncan, Dusty, Boris, Tasha, Tammy, Taku, a malamute whose name we can't recall who we gave away after a few weeks because it attacked Taku and killed one of our rabbits, Molly, Bridget, Ginger, and Misty. She also loved birds, travelling, swimming in Lake Washington (or any open water), eating heartily, stuffing her pantry and fridge with Costco loot, Christmas, Easter, July 4, Halloween (celebrating these holidays and also decorating her home with all the associated paraphernalia), having her feet rubbed, typing IN ALL CAPS, saving almost everything, taking her completed rolls of film or memory-card to Eastside Photo and always ordering two copies (5x7!) of everything, walking in the outdoors, vodka, white wine, crafts, hosting friends and family, and gardening.

In the many organizations in which she participated over the years -- Lakeside / St. Nicholas Alumni association, Sunset Club, Smith Club, St. Thomas Church, Junior League, YMCA, Campfire, various garden clubs -- and among her friends and family, Ann was known for her ebullient demeanor, booming voice, eternal optimism, and inclusive and generous spirit. Although she thrived on constant events and the social time spent at Overlake and the Seattle Tennis Club, she never felt as comfortable and at peace as she did in a garden.

ANN LOVED GARDENS and gardening. She was a self-taught landscape designer and, often with a pet cockatiel chirping on her shoulder, Ann managed a thriving landscape business, Herron Gardens, for several decades, creating beautiful outdoor spaces for countless clients throughout the Puget Sound region. She instilled in all of us a love of plants and digging in the dirt. During her gardening career, she supported and was supported by the many wonderful fellow gardeners of the Seattle Garden Club and the Lake Washington Garden Club – many thanks to you all!

Ann is survived by three children: Christopher Herron (Setsuko Kondo) of Kyoto, Japan; Elsbeth Herron of Kyoto, Japan; and Todd Citron (Anji Citron) of Bellingham, WA; and by three grandchildren, one great-grandchild, and many nieces, nephews, and cousins. She was predeceased by her son Timothy Herron. She recreates her sibling trio as she now joins her sister Catherine (Cappy) McNutt Rooks and brother John Mauk.

The people of Jamaica are grateful for her generous humanitarian aid over the years. We thank Joana Hartl of Alabama Hill Adult Family Home for her loving care of Ann for the past 4 years.

No memorial service is planned at this time. Please remember Ann by enjoying the splendor of this beautiful world, as she did, and plant as many Rhododendrons and native plants as will fit into your life. Gifts in her name may be made to the Whatcom Land Trust (<http://www.whatcomlandtrust.org/get-involved/support-us/>).

Inch by inch, row by row, Ann made many gardens grow.