



## Barbara Jean Smith

August 10, 1948 - March 30, 2026

Barbara Jean Smith, 77, passed away peacefully on March 26, 2026. Born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Barbara was a proud graduate of Western Michigan University. She dedicated many years of her life to teaching elementary school in Traverse City, where she touched the lives of countless students with her kindness, patience, and deep love of learning.

In her retirement, Barbara made her home in Glen Arbor, where she fully embraced the natural beauty of northern Michigan. She found great joy at Fisher Lake, spending her days kayaking, swimming, and biking around the circle. She cherished her beloved dog, Grace, as well as life's simple pleasures and the close-knit neighbors she called home. She had a great laugh and was always ready for an adventure!

Barb was preceded in death by her father, Russell Smith Sr.; her mother, May Kathleen Damery; her sisters, Marilou Harris and Bonnie Spears; her brother, Russell Smith Jr.; her niece, Karen Harris; Stacey Spears and her great-nephew, Michael Lawrence.

She is lovingly remembered by her nieces and nephews: Julie Stapnowski (husband Keith; children Michael, Madelyn, and Collin), Steve Harris (wife Shirlisa; children Shireena Bennett, Steven, Scott and Shelby), Thomas Spears (children Lauren Bailey, Taylor, Dane, and Brittany), Robert Spears (children Connor, Brooklyn, Cody, and Breana Morris), Bryan Smith (Penny and Ethan Kawakami), Jody Gritter (husband Joel; children Mitchell Lawrence, Colin, and Grace), Shanna Ax (husband Steven; children Tyler and

Timothy), and Kristen Bechler (husband Tony; children Brook Barba and Britta) and many great nieces and nephews.

Barb will be remembered for her adventurous spirit, her devotion to her dogs, students and family, and her deep appreciation for the beauty of the world around her.

In lieu of a funeral, charitable donations can be made to Tunnel to Towers or Empire Methodist Church in her honor. A summer gathering will be planned for honoring/celebrating Barb's life.

Arrangements were made by Wolfe-O'Neill Funeral Home, our family serving yours.

# Tribute Wall



“ My family and I were blessed to be neighbors of Barb when we lived next door to her in the mid 1980’s and she has been a dear friend to us ever since. I was a young teenager when we were neighbors and fondly remember our interactions and the fun times chasing her dog, Penny around. I loved that dog and she was so fast! 😭  
Barb was always so kind and easy-going. What I’ll remember most about Barb was her kindness, smile, laugh and sense of humor. I’m so grateful for Barb’s friendship and the joy she brought, not only to our family, but to so many people. The Hall family misses Barb dearly and we pray she is now at peace with God forever in His kingdom.

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**Chad Hall** - April 13 at 04:51 PM



“ Barb was the ultimate hostess! What a view! We could see her radiant smile when we walked up to her yard on Fisher Lake. Her blue eyes were smiling as we had chairs ready for the neighbors... we celebrated our closeness with each-other! During the gathering, the stories and laughter were inspired by Barb’s leadership. Barb was genuinely kind, funny and stubborn, and she taught me to not take life so seriously. Barb loved her teaching career to 1-3 graders, especially her times co-teaching with Gayle. Barb enjoyed traveling to faraway places, sail boat adventures and spending time in Europe. Barb was a good biker on the trail, and friendly walker in the circle. Barb loved her nieces and nephews. Her family reunions celebrated her property as her parents wanted most for them. Barb radiated contentment at those family gatherings. Barb, best for last... Her faith was inspiring, and God came first in her life after “Grace”.  
Sarah

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**Shanna Ax** - April 09 at 12:48 PM

MM

“ I taught with Barb at Cherry Knoll. We had so much fun together both in and out of school. We spent many hours laughing and cross country skiing together. All my memories of Barb are good ones. I would love to be invited to her celebration of life this summer.

*Marilyn Mills*

*231-357-9888*

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**Marilyn Mills** - April 06 at 09:44 PM

DM

“ Barb and I worked together at Central Grade School many years ago. She was a great gal that enjoyed her retirement in Leelanau county.

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**Dewey Mummert** - April 03 at 02:45 PM

VA

“ Barbara and I took ski lessons MANY years ago. What fun. I taught school along with Barbara for many years and loved the friendship we established way back in the 1970's, I will remember the fun and times we shared as fellow teachers.

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**Vera (Pike) Augenstein** - April 01 at 08:23 AM