

Hour For Peace NoCo Remembers Margaret Smith

1936-2025



by Rev. Dr. Victoria A. Gardner

Margaret Smith and her husband Dr. Paul Smith were known as “The Dynamic Duo” of peace, justice, and humanitarian activities in Fort Collins. I had the honor of working with them from 2006 until 2015 as part of Plymouth UCC’s Peace With Justice Ministry team, the United Nations Association Northern Colorado Chapter, and then as two of my Hour For Peace NoCo “lieutenants” and board members. They were devout Christians who “walked the walk” and put the teachings of Jesus Christ into practice. Margaret loved the song “He’s got the Whole World in His Hands” and was dedicated to the idea that we all have in our hands the capacity to make the world a better place.



“She’s got the whole world in her hands!”

[illegible]

A photograph of a woman with short white hair and glasses, wearing a black long-sleeved shirt under a brown patterned vest and light-colored trousers. She is seated in a wooden chair at a round table covered with a patterned orange and beige tablecloth. The table is set for a meal with various dishes: a whole roasted turkey on a platter, bowls of stuffing, mashed potatoes, green peas, cranberry sauce, and gravy, as well as bread rolls and butter. There are also several glasses of wine or beer and two bottles of beer on the table. The background shows a plain wall and a doorway.



As Margaret worked for peace, justice, and human rights, she inspired others to carry on her holy work. In fact, she always ended her Emails with "Carry on!" And I pray that all of us will "Carry on" the peace, justice, and humanitarian work about which she was so passionate.

Obituary

<https://www.cedarmemorial.com/Obituary/2025/Jun/Margaret-S-Smith/>

Margaret Sue (McCluggage) Smith, 89, passed away with her daughters by her side at the Oldorf Hospice House of Mercy early on June 26th after 1 1/2 years living with Lewy Body Dementia and a short battle with pneumonia. She had a lifelong love of mountains and rocks, a passion for justice in many settings, and always enjoyed making people laugh.

Margaret was born on March 30, 1936, in Nashville, Kansas, the first child of the Rev. Randolph E. McCluggage and Harriette (Jones) McCluggage. Her father was a Presbyterian minister specialized in frontier and Native American congregations, so the family moved frequently. She spent her pre-school years in LaSalle, CO, where brother Dennis was born, then Eckley; Grade school in Del Norte, CO, where sister Mary Lynne was born, then Ignacio, and on to Mancos, CO for middle school.

In 1950 the family drove up the recently opened Alaska Highway, moving to Auke Bay, AK. She attended high school in Juneau and helped in building the rustic Chapel By the Lake - with its view across Auke Lake to the Mendenhall Glacier it was on the cruise tour circuit for years.

She attended Park College outside Kansas City, Missouri, graduating with a French and Spanish major. There she met and invited Paul A. Smith to a Sadie Hawkins dance, and the two began courting. When he proposed, she agreed to move wherever his career took him – on the condition that when he retired, they move back to “her mountains”.

They were married in the Chapel at Auke Lake, by Walter Soboleff, the first Native Alaskan ordained Presbyterian minister. She set the wedding date for August 27, 1958 - the day after the Alaska Statehood election, which she was proud of having voted in as a resident of the Territory.

The couple lived in St. Louis, MO during Paul's Masters studies, then moved to the Boston area where she gave birth to daughters Valerie and Amy while he completed a PhD in Physics. He was offered a faculty position at Coe College, so her young family moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, in August of 1964, where she lived for the next 40 years.

During the 1960s, in addition to raising her own daughters, Margaret was part of a small group of volunteers from First Congregational Church who founded a Day Care program. She served as Secretary, then President of its board as it transitioned to become a government service, now called the Linn County Child Development Center. She was able to return for the 35th anniversary of that transition and was presented a “Champion of Children” award in recognition of her efforts.

Margaret liked to say she learned her values from the church, and how to carry out those values from the League of Women Voters, in which she was most active during the 1970s. She served on committees that studied and made presentations on proposed constitutional amendments and county home rule, served as State Legislative Chair and enjoyed attending national conventions, as well as serving as President of the local LWV, a role which she reprised 10 years later.

Having moved to a new house and church, she became active at Central Park Presbyterian - in everything from coordinating adult Sunday school to committees for selecting a new hymnal, then calling a new pastor – she even wrote a hymn about the Holy Spirit which was used during several Pentecost services.

Margaret joined the paid workforce in the mid-1970s, first part-time at Sondrol's Hardware, then as Interlibrary Loan Representative at Cedar Rapids Public Library in 1977. She was elected President of the Staff Association in 1979, unionized them into the CWA in '80, and went full time in 1981. She also delved into electoral politics, running for County Supervisor in 1978 and serving as Precinct Captain for Jesse Jackson's 1984 Presidential campaign.

During the 1990s, daughter Amy (Rik) Dorff gave Margaret two grandsons, whom she enjoyed helping care for - up to 30 hours per week after dropping back to part time at the library. She finally returned to Juneau, AK for a couple of high school reunions, and embarked upon a multi-year research project to select the best mountain town to retire to.

In the 2000s, she was a founding member of "Women for Peace Iowa" which formed post-9/11 and strove to prevent the 2003 Gulf War. In 2004, she and Paul moved to Fort Collins, CO. There she was honored to become the first President of a new chapter of the United Nations Association and served another 10 years as Membership Chair. Plymouth Congregational Church of the UCC became their new spiritual home and family. They were grateful for the wonderful atmosphere, caring people, open and affirming worship, music, and plentiful adult ed classes offered.

Well into her 70s, Margaret (and Paul) still enjoyed hiking and tent camping - with Amy and the Dorff family every July in Rocky Mountain National Park and on longer trips with Valerie – to Dinosaur National Monument (including whitewater rafting) in 2006, and a final grand tour of SW CO in 2015 (with hotel stays).

In December 2013, at the age of 77, Margaret was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia. It was an early diagnosis as she was aware of small changes in her cognitive abilities. She joined a support group to learn all she could about what to expect and convinced the UNA to let her step back from leadership.

In 2016, Margaret noted that in her younger days, she enjoyed being a purveyor of information, but as her dementia slowly progressed, she was more likely to say a kind word than to inform. After Paul was diagnosed with a different dementia, they did their best to help each other, with much appreciated support from Plymouth UCC's parish visitor Lory Clukey and others.

In 2017 they moved to assisted living, and in 2018 to memory care in Colorado. In April 2019, they agreed to move back to Iowa - to Promise House Memory Care in Hiawatha - so their daughters could be more involved. Paul passed a week before COVID shutdown in March 2020. That November, at the age of 84, Margaret moved "home" into the other half of the Hiawatha duplex Valerie had been in for some years. At that time, she was still walking (with support), talking (but usually not full sentences) and eating (some) on her own - and she still enjoyed playing beach ball volleyball from her recliner and outings to county and state parks.

She maintained a positive attitude as her abilities declined and the amount of care she needed increased and was a favorite of her Right at Home caregivers. During her last few months, when she could no longer sit up, eat or drink on her own and rarely spoke, her smile would still make one's day.

Margaret is survived by her daughters, Valerie Smith and Amy (Rik) Dorff, grandsons Nik and Luke Dorff (all local), 10 nieces and a nephew. She was predeceased by her parents, siblings, and husband, Paul.

Many thanks to Dr. Mary Anne Nelson for her support over the last 5 years. Per Margaret's wishes, her brain was donated to Lewy Body research prior to her cremation.

A celebration of life will be held at a later date. If you would like to join in a backyard gathering to remember Margaret with her daughters and caregivers on Sunday, July 13th, please contact ValerieSmi@aol.com, 319-651-3354, or visit facebook.com/Margaret.S.Smith.1936 for details.