



A. Joan Smith-Walleck

August 15, 2022

Joan Smith-Walleck was born in Pittsburgh, PA and died on August 15th. Professionally, Joan worked as a nurse in several capacities throughout her career, caring for others was one of her many strengths. During her career Joan worked a public-school nurse, a Vision Quest wagon train nurse, a Red Cross disaster services nurse, and a visiting nurse.

When not working she enjoyed camping, hiking, and leading nature walks pointing out flowers and mushrooms. She shared her love of art and nature with many. Joan touched many peoples' lives in many different ways.

Painting porcelain was her passion. Her training included local teachers and renown porcelain painters in Europe. Her work focused on botanical paintings of flowers, fruits and vegetables, and her personal favorite, mushrooms. Most works are labeled in calligraphy with its Latin designation. Joan spent hours in her art studio happily painting and listening to classical music. Her artwork was displayed in numerous shows, including several solo exhibitions. In her late 70's, she was appointed to a position of artist in residence at Weir Farms National Park, CT.

Her parents were Thomas Smith and Eleanor Rohrberg. After graduating from Shadyside nursing school, she married Donald Kruper. Together they raised four children; Martha Kruper Straw, Thomas Kruper (wife Melinda), Curtis Kruper, and Jeffrey Kruper, who preceded his parents. Later she married Robert Walleck, adding Jeffery Walleck (wife Astrid), Scott Walleck (wife Kelly), and Keith Walleck who preceded her. Many other loving family

members will remember her fondly.

Grandchildren include Billy Straw (wife Alex), Madeline Kruper, Timothy Kruper, Johanne Walleck Hurson (husband Douglas), Kirsten Walleck, Timothy Walleck, and Alex Walleck. Anders Walleck preceded her.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Monday, August 22 at 10:00 am at Penn Forest Natural Burial Park. In lieu of flowers contributions can be made to the American Red Cross (<https://www.redcross.org/donate/donation.html/>) or Possible, a healthcare non-profit helping underserved in Nepal started by her second cousin and his wife (<https://possiblehealth.org/donate/>).

Cemetery Details

Penn Forest Cemetery

121 Colorado Street
Verona, PA 15147

Tribute Wall



“ *A. Joan Smith-Walleck*

October 09, 2023 at 09:55 AM



“ *A. Joan Smith-Walleck*

October 06, 2023 at 11:36 AM

“ *Joan Smith-Walleck and the Wagon Train*

By Janis Ramey

Joan needed a job. She was in the middle of divorce, restless, unemployed, and needing money. An ad in the Sunday paper caught her attention – Needed: medical provider. Must be willing to relocate. “Relocate” was a mild way of saying “must be willing to ride in a wagon train for months on end, camp in a different spot every night, pee behind a tree if necessary, and – oh yes, – work with 50 adjudicated teenagers”. So, of course, she applied.

The teenagers were sentenced by courts and arrived from sheriffs’ offices, juvenile facilities, and jails. They usually showed up with a scowl, rebellious, disheveled, and even dirty. And most graduated from the program standing straight, well groomed, responsible, disciplined, and ready to get on with their lives. Sentences varied, of course, but were typically one to two years. The kids – mostly boys, although there were a few girls – ranged from 16 to 20 years old.

Joan on the trail in 1992

The kids learned to take care of the mules and horses, all the tack, their own gear, and the teepees they slept in. Joan was duly responsible for health, hygiene, and safety but says she mostly dispensed hugs. She always wore perfume behind her ear so the kids would get a whiff of something good when she hugged them, not the odors from horses and mules.

They traveled almost daily for months, breaking and setting up camp every day. When settled for the evening, the kids attended school taught by teachers that traveled with them. As kids demonstrated a willingness to behave and learn, they were given more responsibility and respect. Peer pressure helped.

Joan remembers “clop-clopping” past the gold-topped Boston Courthouse, going to the LLBean store in Maine in the middle of the night, and camping in a field along Washington Boulevard right here in

Pittsburgh. She also remembers breaking the ice in her water bowl on cold mornings to wash her face and waiting out a terrible storm that threatened to maim the mules and horses because they were standing in wet mud.

*Vision Quest teepees around a campfire at sunset
Newspapers in many of the towns they passed published articles
about their visit. Even Life Magazine ran a photo essay about them.
Vision Quest is the name of the agency that runs the program.
A couple years ago she was in Arizona and saw a trail of road
apples (droppings) that looked familiar and sure enough led to a
Vision Quest encampment. Even more surprising was that the
wagon master was the same man Joan had worked with. He was
still calling "move 'em out" in a loud voice.*

Martha Straw - August 23, 2022 at 09:01 PM

DR

“ 1 file added to the album A. Joan Smith-Walleck



Drew - August 20, 2022 at 01:51 PM

DR

“ When I was a kid, my best friend was Joan's youngest son, Jeff. Jeff and I were inseparable. And so consequently. I spent alot of time at his/her house. 'Toad' as Joan was frequently called, took me under her arm, her wing, her amphibian leg so to speak. She took Jeff and I on numerous trips with the Girl Scouts- on trips she assisted on, and exposed me to alot of nature. We watched her in her art studio in their basement where she painted and did her art, and then fired her finished products in their kiln in that basement. It was crazy cool! Later as I grew up, Toad always followed my travels, and I followed hers with the Red Cross. When I had a son, she came to Colorado (numerous times) and would stay with us so she could meet him and be invested in his life and share with him her warmth, and patience, and wisdom, and smile as she had for me. She lived a good life and had nothing to be ashamed of-she got her money's worth out of this planet, and this planet would be alot better off with women (and men) of Joan's integrity and energy. I send hugs and love to all that knew her. Peace to all. - Drew Levinson

Drew - August 20, 2022 at 01:40 PM

MS

Thank you Drew and son. Martha

Martha Straw - August 22, 2022 at 06:19 AM