Wills, Leona ‘Pat’

November 24, 2021



LEONA ‘PAT’ WILLS

March, 28th, 1928 – November 18th, 2021

As a blizzard was waning in the early hours of Thursday, November 18th, 2021 Pat Wills was leaving the world. Being a straight shooter and a ‘tell-it-as-she-saw-it’ woman, Pat had no interest in describing the inevitable as ‘crossing over’ or ‘passing away’. She wanted it said straight when her turn came. So let it be known that, after a long and arduous struggle with a strong will and an even stronger heart, *Pat Wills died*.

Leona Blanche Smith, or Pat as she was known from an early age, was the youngest of eight children born to first generation Irish-Canadians, John and Matilda Smith. As was the norm for the family of a CNR maintenance foreman, the Smiths moved where the work took them. After leaving her birth place of

Bridgeford, the family lived briefly in Chipperfield before settling in Fir Mountain. It was the Fir Mountain years that enabled Pat to come of age. It was also there that Pat's directness continued to flourish. As the story goes, Matilda often found it necessary to remind her youngest child that 'the spoken word could never be unsaid'. Nevertheless, Pat charged onward with a direct but caring spirit, a quick mind and a sharp tongue.

Given limited educational opportunities in Fir Mountain, Pat moved to Regina and bunked in with her eldest sister Jean to complete grade twelve at Scott Collegiate. She left as the class valedictorian. Pat's next change of address involved a fateful move to Moose Jaw where she would train as a nurse at the Union Hospital. She graduated in the Class of '49 but, before doing so, was swept off her feet by Jack Wills, her life-long love. They married in 1950 and soon found a home on the east side where they would raise five children: Jeff (Steveston, BC), Jill (Cochrane, AB), Bob (Moose Jaw), Jim (Lethbridge, AB) and Joe (Moose Jaw).

It was on the corner of Hall and 3rd Ave NE that Pat put down roots. Those roots and a happy home gave way to a subtle dynamo. Pat was an RN and a stay-at-home Mom, a St. Andrews Sunday School Teacher and a United Church Explorer Leader. She was a voice in the choir. Pat was a bowler and a long-time member of both the Tennis Club and the YM/YWCA. She was a walker, a good gardener and a great baker. Her apple pies were 'to die for' and her Halloween popcorn balls were sought after by Ross School kids from near and far.

But most of all she was happy just to be Mom, or Mrs. Wills to the neighbourhood kids, Auntie Pat to her nieces and nephews, and Gramma to grandchildren who adored her. Make no mistake. It was Mom who held things together. It was Mrs. Wills who stood her ground when it was needed most. Whether she was wielding a straw broom to break up a teenage beat-down on the corner, bringing a less fortunate Explorer home for a make-over before the big Christmas function, addressing City Council with her quick mind and sharp tongue, or simply sharing coffee with good friends; one never had to guess where Pat stood. Through the years she remained ever candid with her life views whether

or not they represented popular opinion.

As the seasons drifted by and Pat's guns grew a little rusty, she continued to be a straight shooter. She also lived on as a loyal Moose Javian and a tried and true east-ender. Even after Jack was gone and she had moved into a pleasant suite in 'The Avenues', Pat remained convinced that the air on the east side was always fresher. So now with the ubiquitous 'in lieu of flowers', those so inclined may make a contribution in Pat's name to A. E. Peacock Collegiate, 145 Ross Street E, Moose Jaw, SK S6H 0S3. She was, after all, an east-end gal.

In keeping with Pat's wishes, there will be no funeral. Instead a family gathering/wake will be take place at future date. In all likelihood, it will happen somewhere on the east side. In the interim, however, here's hoping that Pat's final wish will unfold as it should. *That wish* – the chance to return as a guardian angel for young children everywhere in her next incarnation … Slàinte Mhath Gramma, Slàinte Mhath!

Arrangements are entrusted to Moose Jaw Funeral Home, 268 Mulberry Lane. Andrew Pratt Funeral Director 306-693-4550

1.



Vicki Olafson on November 24, 2021 at 7:09 pm

What wonderful times my parents , Jim and Wilma Heming,had with Pat and Jack! May happy memories sustain you all at this time! Blessings!

Reply

2.



Melina Shepley on November 24, 2021 at 8:32 pm

Dear Jim and Mauie, sending heartfelt condolences to you and the rest of the family on the loss of Jim’s mom. May the happy and joyful memories of times spent with her, help carry you through this difficult time.

Reply

3.



Pam Ludwar on November 24, 2021 at 9:53 pm

Sending Pat’s children my sincere condolences. She was an icon-and will be sorely missed by all those who knew her.

Reply

4.



Diana Humenick on November 25, 2021 at 5:56 am

A dynamo is done. I loved having a visit with Pat. I never had to worry about understanding her feelings. They were said explicitly. East Enders tell it like it is. May good memories help family and friends stay strong.

Reply

5.



Brian and Gwen Montague on November 25, 2021 at 6:33 am

Pat was such a great lady with a very strong work ethic and character. She will be sadly missed by all who knew

her. Our condolences to the entire Wills family. Your great memories of shared times will keep you strong at this difficult time.

Reply

6.



Kevin Best on November 25, 2021 at 8:41 am

Pat was sorely missed in the neighborhood when she left for the “Avenues”, however she would wander back occasionally. The dogs were most disturbed, as no more cheese and sausage was to be found at the house on the corner. Godspeed Pat!

Reply

7.



Howie Verity, Sylvan Lake, Ab. on November 25, 2021 at 9:00 am

Deepest sympathy to the family. You can’t think of Moose jaw and Peacock High without thinking of the Wills. Your mom and dad never missed coming to any event. You have so many great memories. God bless you as you honor your mom.

Reply

8.



Kerry St.Cyr on November 25, 2021 at 9:23 am

My condolences to the family on your loss.
My memories of your parents and their support for you, and by extension all of us on the teams you played on, has stuck in my memory through the years.
They were special people.

Reply

9.



Dennis Grado on November 25, 2021 at 9:31 am

Jim And Mauie and all the Wills families our hearts and prayers are with you during this time. Pat was truly a “ East Ender “. Take Care.

Pam and Dennis Grado

Reply

10.



Connie Bradley on November 25, 2021 at 10:34 am

Our sincere condolences to all of the Wills family. Pat was most certainly ‘one of a kind’ and her smile lit up a room.

Ken & Connie Bradley

Reply

11.



Darla and Lloyd Spicer on November 25, 2021 at 11:16 am

Our deepest condolences to the Wills Family on your Mom’s death. May your wonderful memories sustain you during these sad days.

Reply

12.



Donna Forbes (Best) on November 25, 2021 at 4:04 pm

It was with a warm heart and a smile that I welcomed Pat to “the Avenues”, as I was also from Pat’s east end neighborhood and had spent my childhood walking past the Wills home on my way to school… then on to my time at the Y and those wonderful ladies who welcomed me. She was a wonderful lady.

Reply

13.



Lori Dean on November 25, 2021 at 5:44 pm

Mrs. Wills (I could never bring myself to call her Pat) was an unique and much-admired dynamo. And I can attest to the sought-after popcorn balls-my favourite Halloween treat for many years. Thinking of you Jim, Mauie, Joe and all of the family and sending heartfelt condolences.

Reply

14.



Colette Krawczyk on November 25, 2021 at 9:49 pm

To all the Wills family…our thoughts are with you in this time of sorrow. Cherish all the good memories as I know there are many ….Colette (Veillard) and Dave Krawczyk

Reply

15.



Sheila and Brian Leahy on November 26, 2021 at 6:26 pm

Pat is now reunited with Jack. She was a lady who told it like it was. What a spitfire. We know her family and friends will cherish the happy memories they have of her. We hope in time these memories will bring you comfort, hope, strength , and peace. Pat had a life well lived. Take care.

Reply

16.



Bill Shiers on November 29, 2021 at 10:53 am

Bob, Joe and the extended Wills families, I want to express my condolences. Your mom was a wonderful spirit and will be missed by all. Thoughts are with you.

Reply

17.



Barb (Hughton) Morrison on November 29, 2021 at 8:49 pm

Most sincere condolences to all the Wills “kids.” Your mom is missed by so many. It was always a fun time when Pat was around. I remember the Class of ’49 gathering at our house and hearing of their shenanigans while in nurses’ training. I had the pleasure of chauffeuring four of the “girls” to their 60th class reunion in Medicine Hat. So much laughter! I am imagining Smith and Astleford enjoying a heavenly reunion, laughing once again about sneaking in the fire escape and harrowing walks over the train trestle. May your wealth of happy memories bring you comfort.

Reply

18.



gerry reilly/Pat Reilly on December 1, 2021 at 9:34 am

Condolences to the family of a wonderful lady who an asset to us and the whole world . She lived as a neighbor for years and was a great lady to visit with. We will miss her forever. May God bless mom and the whole family.

Reply

19.



Bonnie and Vern on December 1, 2021 at 1:50 pm

‘Auntie’ Pat as she was known to me was a one of a kind – she was my Mom’s youngest sister. I remember going to the Wills’ household as a child, and being in awe at the messiness of the house – it was usually weekend or holidays and the kids had every blanket and cushion in the house draped over the couches and had forts all over the living room – it was wonderful! I always felt welcome there and Auntie Pat treated me like one of her own! The Wills family always came to our house at the farm for Christmas and we always had a great time. I am forever grateful to Auntie Pat for being so good to my Mom when she moved to The Bentley in Moose Jaw – they became very close. Sending love and peace to the all the family at this sad time.

Reply