



## Netia Irene Pederson

September 21, 1941 - June 27, 2023

Netia passed away on June 27, 2023. She was born in Kalispell, Mont., to Irene Elizabeth Ann (Gray) and Elmer Ruben Ridenour, Netia was flanked by a prim and proper older sister, Carley Ridenour, and a playful, peppy younger sister, Julie Connolly. Like all sisters, they loved each other to the moon and back (just not as much in the back seat of the car).

Netia contracted polio at age 4, just as Elmer harvested the first ears of sweet corn from the family garden. She desperately wanted corn but was instead rushed into quarantine. For 24 hours a day, her parents applied steaming wool packs to her tight, twisting muscles. In September, friends sang "happy birthday" outside of her window. She viewed Christmas celebrations from an open bedroom door.

Learning to walk again was hard, along with the constant, painful reminder "Netia, put your heels down!" Polio left one leg shorter than the other, but she didn't complain. With a whimsical smile, she'd hem her pants to match. When she grew tired, she had a slight limp.

At age 11, Pete and Irene Butterfly inducted Netia and her sisters into the Blackfoot Indian tribe as honorary members, a tribute to the friendship forged between the tribe and her father, Elmer. As the sun came up, they gave Netia the name "Feather Woman."

As a teen, Netia received a job offer at Glacier National Park. Her father wasn't happy. He swore she'd end up meeting and falling in love "with a Norwegian." Possibly marrying said rogue Viking.

Which, of course, she did.

How she put up with our father, Elden Wilber Pederson, we will never know. Dad (somehow) persuaded her not only to marry him but to take part in his wild projects and daring adventures. He worked for IBM in the early days of the space era; they had a cozy new triplex in a manicured 1960s suburb of Fort Collins, CO. Then they crammed (with their two young daughters) into the front seat of a pickup and drove the rugged ALCAN highway to Alaska in 1969 "on vacation."

They lived in Alaska, off and on, for the next 40 years. Settling in Anchorage during the "boom years" of the Alaskan Pipeline, Netia became a partner in their residential home business, Pederson Construction. She not only managed the back office but often held "the other end" of whatever had to be nailed into place.

In addition, she ensured our home remained presentable (our family still subscribes to "a lick and a promise" cleaning protocol, courtesy of our grandmother. It means "a quick lick now and a promise to clean more later". Our collective, robust, immune systems are grateful.

Netia also wanted to ensure her daughters Tesha Panther of Cheney, Wash., and Laron Glover of Snohomish, Wash., turned out to be respectable, contributing members of society (they did, but not without a lot of effort on her part).

If her girls pushed the limits, she would have a frank discussion, starting with, "What were you thinking; leaving no time to answer, because clearly, thinking was not involved in whatever transgression had transpired. She would then follow with the social reprimand, "Young ladies do not do that." And she'd wrap things up with the spiritual, "What would Jesus do?" (uh... guessing probably not what we just did).

When her daughters were in elementary school, Netia signed up for community guitar lessons. She could never get her guitar perfectly tuned, but she practiced diligently, plucking out notes to "Whispering Hope" while Elden worked late and the girls were in bed. The vibration of those slightly off-key strings would drift around the lamp-lit crack in the bedroom door and lull them to sleep.

Later, at age 75, she signed up for piano lessons, never progressing past book Level 2. It didn't matter. "I'll never be Mozart," she'd say, "but that won't stop me from trying." Netia wanted to learn. She didn't let perfection get in the way. She believed that music wasn't just for the talented and tuneful, that joyful music is for all of us.

Netia was, literally, game for any adventure. From city lights to kerosene, electric heat to a wood stove, in 1978, she agreed to make a new home (and batches of legendary Home Brew) in a cabin on beautiful Shell Lake, 12 miles outside of Skwentna, Alaska.

And although she went along with Elden's adventures, she wasn't a pushover. Tired of processing the salmon he brought home after midnight from one of his fly-in fishing trips, they had a discussion. We aren't exactly sure how it went down, but on the next trip, Elden packed a Coleman stove, a pressure cooker, and a canner. He got to fish. Netia got to wake up to several cases of

canned salmon in the morning, and they stayed married for more than 50 years.

During that time, exploring and learning became a lifetime adventure. With Elden, she traveled the world, visiting over 65 countries. Side-by-side, in their 50s, they earned bachelor's degrees in education from Eastern Washington University. Along with newly minted teaching skills, they packaged up their life knowledge and taught K-12 in the remote Alaskan village of Stony River. Later, they moved to Post Falls, Idaho, Fairbanks, Alaska, and finally Spokane, Wash.

After Elden died in 2011, Netia adopted a rescue lab mix, Gabby (at which point, all children were bumped down a notch in the family hierarchy). She trained Gabby to be a Pet Partner, visiting places such as the Ronald McDonald House or Hospice of Spokane to bring a spot of furry happiness to others.

She continued to travel and explore, inviting her children and grandchildren to come along. Netia not only traveled light (one small suitcase!) but worked diligently to minimize her earthly possessions. She wanted her legacy to be simple, quiet, a soft breeze over a wildflower. She succeeded.

Her parents, Elmer and Irene, her sister Carley, and her husband, Elden, preceded Netia in death.

She leaves behind daughters: Tesha (Les)Panther and, Laron (Jeff)Glover, her sister: Julie Connolly; her grandchildren, Haley (Scott)Simmons, Mica (Keith)Mateo, Ruby Kropidlowski, Anna Kropidlowski, and Benjamin Glover; great-grandchildren, Elden and Joran Simmons and Aleigha Mateo.

She also leaves behind beloved nieces and nephews, extended family

members, dear friends, and many children and grandchildren of the heart.

How to sum up a life? Small in stature, and big in heart, Netia had beautiful blue-gray eyes. Her smile was soft and shy but would also light up the room. She extended grace to everyone. Quietly spiritual, she embodied the greatest values of her Christian faith. She found inner strength during hard times, saying, "If that's the worst thing that ever happened to me, I guess I have it made."

Netia delighted in flowers; found dog shapes in clouds. She loved watching sunsets.

She'd say, "No memorials needed," but, if you want to honor her, a gift to Spokane County Regional Animal Protection or Hospice House of Spokane would have brought her happiness and joy.

We will miss you forever, our dear friend, sweet grandmother, beautiful, best-ever, "Minnie Mum."

Rest in love.