

# Naches loses its 'ambassador'

Janet Anderson died  
in December at age 81

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NACHES — Janet Anderson never viewed her life as extraordinary.

She lost her husband in a logging accident when she was 33. She raised her three children on her own, and she put herself through college to become an elementary school teacher for the Yakima School District. She also served on the Naches Town Council for 20 years, committed to making her hometown shine.



Anderson

Yet to her, these acts were nothing special.

"Mom loved Naches," said her daughter, Bonnie Isom of Yakima. "She never gave up. A lot of people just looked the other way, but she wanted to make Naches a better place."

Anderson died in her sleep Dec. 13 at the age of 81, leaving behind a town proud to tout her accomplishments — even if she wouldn't.

"She was our best ambassador. Everybody loved her," said Town Administrator Jeff Ranger. "Anywhere you went, she just brought good will. She was always giving and open and well received."

Anderson lived her entire life in the same house on Moxee Avenue. She usually wore pink — her signature color — and she adorned her yard with begonias and dogwood, also in pink.

She sang in the choir at Naches

## ANDERSON

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Presbyterian Church, and she was a sucker for love stories like "Gone With the Wind." She traveled to Hawaii more than 25 times, and her pies earned the most money at town auctions.

She was also a major financial contributor to the Naches pool, helping keep it open last summer.

Her town — and its 760 residents — defined who she was, Isom said.

"That was her corner of the world," said Isom, who works as an elementary school math curriculum coach. "Naches is a magical place. You can't beat a small town."

What makes Naches special is how everyone looks out for one another, said Margaret St. Martin, owner of Margaret's Apple Cart Deli. They supported Anderson when she continued her education. They mowed her lawn, drove her to her appointments, supplied her with food and company.

A few years ago, when Anderson missed her weekly hair appointment, her neighbors were quick to check on

her. They found her in her basement, bleeding from a fall. Anderson later credited these people with saving her life.

"Everybody gave back because she was so giving," Ranger said. "She never wanted to take more than she gave."

To her loved ones, Anderson was open and feisty, gracious and independent. When Isom voiced her distaste for unmarried couples living together, Anderson told her to "get a grip." And when people raged their grievances at town council meetings, Anderson would still thank them for their comments.

State Rep. Charles Ross, R-Naches, said Anderson will be remembered for the example she set.

"Just growing up and knowing her my entire life, I've learned so much from her," said Ross, who earlier served as Naches' mayor. "She is who she is because of her community. She was one of the pillars, definitely."

Councilwoman Rhonda Schab agrees, saying Anderson was one of the kindest women she ever knew.

"I just respected her so much for the life that she lived," she said. "That's just

wasn't a stranger for her; she knew everybody throughout Yakima County. ... She was just a wonderful woman."

Counting herself lucky to have had her as a mom, Isom said Anderson set high standards for herself, her children and her numerous grandchildren. While Isom became a teacher, her brother, Eric, became a signal maintainer for Union Pa-

cific Railway in Salem, Ore., and her other brother, John, works at the chemical plant, Cascade Solutions, south of Goldendale.

"Her legacy lives on in each of us," Isom said. "We'll continue to do things for our loved ones and our town. That's our tribute to her."

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