



## Elizabeth J. " B.J." Smith

September 8, 1920 - January 16, 2013

### ROBERT E. (BOB) AND ELIZABETH J. (B.J.) SMITH

Theirs was an adventurous 70 year Love Story. They met at a Tip-Toppers Dance in Mt. Clemens in 1943. Bob was stationed nearby at Selfridge Air Force Base; B.J. was there (reluctantly) with one of her friends from Detroit. Their love blossomed quickly, but they decided to wait until after the war was over to get married. They wed on January 5, 1946 and just recently celebrated their 67th anniversary. On Tuesday, January 15, 2013 Bob died; BJ followed suit 25 hours later on Wednesday, January 16th.

Bob was born in Kansas City, MO on August 31, 1919 to William R. and Alleta M. Smith. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps and while at Selfridge, participated in the training of the Tuskegee Air Squadron (of "Red Tails" fame). After the war he pursued a career as an artist (he was also an accomplished musician) but after 13 years of varying success, decided to apply his talents to a career as an automotive engineer. He worked at the GM Tech Center in Warren, MI, retiring in 1981. As a retiree, he resumed his artistic endeavors, participating and even hosting several art shows in Harbor Beach, MI and Hudson, FL.

B.J. was born in Detroit, MI on September 8, 1920 to Edward A. and Zelma L. Rice. She was the last of the "Cooley Girls", a group of girls who met in high school and continued to be friends for the rest of their lives. One member of that group was her daughter-in-law Sherry's mother Virginia ("Ginny"). Right after high school she enrolled at Wayne State University, graduating in 1942.

During that period she also enrolled in pilot training; she was prepared to go through the final phase of the program when the war broke out and all the women were "kicked out" to make way for the men. She worked as an Accounting Executive at Nash –Kelvinator before and during World War II. After her marriage she found fulfillment as a loving wife and mother and volunteer for the next sixty-seven years.

Bob and B.J. were survived by their four sons: Steven (Barbara), Laird (Karin), Douglas (Sherry) and Randall (Jaimee). Also by grandchildren: Melissa (Robert) Clark, Jennifer (Paul) McCaffrey, Sebastian (Karime) Smith, and by Corinna and Brandon Smith. Plus great-grandchildren: Coty and Megan Southworth, Olivia McCaffrey, Isabella and Sophia Clark. Also surviving are numerous cousins, nephews and nieces, including B.J.'s namesake Liz. They were preceded in death by their granddaughter Aimee E. Smith, by Bob's two sisters Dora Merrick and Alleta "Babe" Lee and by B.J.'s brother John Rice and his wife Madeline.

The family wishes to thank the Independence Village staff and Hospice Advantage for their dedicated and loving care over the past seven months. Services will be held at Holihan-Atkin Funeral Home in Grand Ledge on Saturday, January 26, 2013 with Dr. Rev. Julie Kilmer presiding. Visitation will begin at 10:00 a.m. one hour prior to the service at 11:00 a.m. Lunch will be provided after the service. Memorial contributions in lieu of flowers may be made to Hospice Advantage, 801 S. Waverly Road, Suite 304, Lansing, Michigan 48917.

# Cemetery Details

## Oakwood Cemetery

299 Halbert Street  
Grand Ledge, MI 48837

# Previous Events

## Visitation

**JAN 26.** 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Holihan-Atkin-Barclay Funeral Home & Cremation Services  
406 N. Bridge Street  
Grand Ledge, MI 48837  
(517) 627-2531  
jasonbarclay@holihanatkin.com  
<https://www.holihanatkin.com>

## Service

**JAN 26.** 11:00 AM (ET)

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# Tribute Wall



“ *Holihan-Atkin-Barclay Funeral Home & Cremation Services created a Tribute Video in memory of Elizabeth J. " B.J." Smith*



**Holihan-Atkin-Barclay Funeral Home** - January 16, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ *0 file added to the tribute wall*

January 23, 2013 at 11:40 AM



“ *65 files added to the album New Album Name*



**Jason Barclay** - January 23, 2013 at 11:39 AM

LS

“ 3 files added to the album *Bob and BJ*



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**Laird R. Smith** - January 20, 2013 at 05:03 PM

BS

“ 3 files added to the album *Bob and BJ*



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**Barbara Smith** - January 17, 2013 at 10:24 PM