



Mrs. Margrit Elise de Graff

October 6, 1927 - April 21, 2023

“I NEVER turn back!” 79 year-old Margrit de Graff responded over her shoulder to daughter Anka, who wanted to turn around. The two were cycling in high-speed traffic on the German autobahn during a cycling trip through Germany and France. Our mom was bold, decisive and confident, famous for not “acting her age”. She was still cycling on her recumbent bicycle a few days before her death at age 95, even though a stroke in 2020 left her using a walker, much to her disgust.

Margrit de Graff slipped peacefully away on April 21st, 2023, surrounded by her children. She had just purchased and moved into her new home in the small Alberta town of High River.

Born in Luneburg, Germany on Oct 6, 1927, Margrit was a natural leader, running a vocal and recorder music group at ages 13-14 and appointed athletic director for 140 youth athletes when she was 15 and 16. At 17 she was captured as a prisoner of war by the English, along with a rag-tag group of under-age kids sent out against the allies in a last-ditch attempt by the failing Nazi government. After the war, she was the German high jump champion and a member of the German Olympic track team (Germany was banned from the 1948 games in England).

After WWII, Margrit immigrated to Ontario with her husband Dieter Hentschel,

with whom she had five children. Widowed at 32, Margrit married Jim de Graff of Alberta, who had five children of his own. They then had two more children together. Margrit ran a market garden, drove a school bus, had a rural mail route, and taught skiing and fitness classes to support the family.

In her 50's and beyond, Margrit built and ran De Graff's Resort at Gull Lake while competing in sports and earning a vast trove of medals. In X-Country Skiing, these included two golds, three silver and two bronzes at World Masters Championships, seven golds and one bronze at Canadian Masters Championships, five golds, one silver and three bronzes at Alberta Winter Games, three golds at Canadian Birkebeiners, and seven golds and one silver at Loppets. In her 80s, after a broken leg healed crooked, she turned to cycling. From ages 82-86 she won four bronzes, four silvers and two golds, racing at the Alberta 55+ and Seniors Games, despite competing against racers 20 years younger and with only an 8-gear cycle assembled from two garage sale bikes. She went on to win two golds at the 2014 Canadian 55+ Games at age 87.

After a productive, busy life, Margrit was able to realize a life-long dream of becoming a writer when she turned 80. A few days before her birthday she boarded a tramp freighter—one of four passengers—and circumnavigated the globe for five months. That's when she started writing in earnest. This pursuit, too, turned to gold. Over the next few years, she wrote gold-medal winning short stories, published in multiple anthologies and magazines, and self-published books of poetry and memoir.

In 2016 she moved from Lacombe to Canmore in the Rocky Mountains to cycle, ski, garden and write. There she bought a Hat Shop which is now Degraff's Hat Shop in Bragg Creek, owned and run by daughter Indy.

We want to thank the amazing team of Doctors and Nurses in the Critical Care

Unit in High River Hospital. Those who knew Margrit are welcomed to leave memories, photos, and messages to the family on the obituary page at lylereeves.com.

Caring for the family is Lyle Reeves Funerals of High River (Craig Snodgrass)
403.652.4242.

Tribute Wall

DT

“ *Very nice woman. My family used to camp in her property at Gull lake in the '70's. Always loved buying candy at the window at the end of her house. Remember the packs of cigarettes in the basket for customer's to purchase as well. Also went crazy for the junked cars in her yard. We always had fun camping there, great memories!*

Dave Trent - March 12 at 07:25 PM

DI

“ *I have memories of visiting her home near Gull Lake. Margrit was a woman of strong opinions and strong will who navigated life's challenges with courage. May she rest in peace.*

Diana - May 23, 2023 at 11:40 AM

J(

“ *My condolences to the family. I didn't know Margrit well, only through going to school in Bentley so many years ago, and then to my delight, connecting with her at a book showing. An inspiring woman who lived life well!*

Jackie Vanderheide-Born (Boot) - May 22, 2023 at 07:42 PM

NS

“ *By pure chance I picked up a copy of the Rocky Mountain Outlook paper this may long weekend while camping in Banff. I read about Margrit's passing.*

My memories of Margrit are from the bike & ski shop I worked in, in Red Deer - Ride n Glide.

I was just a teen when Margrit would come in looking for wax or bike parts, she was particular in what she wanted, & was frugal in her purchases. I can't tell you exactly what she bought, nor does it matter, but for whatever the reason she remains a memory of a very unique customer who never shared any of the many achievements I've just read about. How i would have loved to have had the chance to sit down & hear some stories of her past. It does sound very colourful.

My condolences to the family, know that she lived an amazing long life & left a mark on many people- even if the last time I saw her was over 30years ago.

*Nick Schultz
Red Deer.*

nick schultz - May 21, 2023 at 10:32 PM



“ 5 files added to the album *Memories Album*



Lyle Reeves Funerals - May 19, 2023 at 11:16 AM



“ 2 files added to the album *Memories Album*



Lyle Reeves Funerals - May 15, 2023 at 02:37 PM