

In Loving Memory



Margaret (Marge) Gitts of Swan Island Dahlias in Canby, OR passed away in her sleep on May 17 in Canby, Oregon, surrounded by family. Born May 10, 1926, She had celebrated her 90th birthday seven days earlier. Born in Bellingham, Washington, she married Nick Gitts on January 2, 1943 – they celebrated 64 years together prior to Nick's passing in 2007. They owned a dairy farm in Laurel, Washington, where Marge worked right alongside Nick and together, they raised their five children.

They also had a small dahlia business, which led them to the purchase of Swan Island Dahlias in Canby in 1963. Originally 20 acres, the farm has expanded to 40 acres of beautiful dahlias, which was eventually sold to their sons, Nicholas and Ted. Although retired, Marge and Nick were always involved with the dahlias and the farm. Marge remained an active member of the Portland DS and the American Dahlia Societies.

With her close friend Jeanette Benson, Marge was known for creating extensive commercial displays. She traveled to several national shows where she always promoted dahlias in general and Swan Island in particular. The Gitts family donated land on the Swan Island property for the ADS Canby Trial Garden. When several of us would visit them in Canby, she and Nick always enjoyed taking visitors on walks to see their extensive rows of seedlings.

Marge had many interests including league bowling, sewing, volunteering in her community, and fishing/hunting. She loved to travel and visited China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Great Britain, & Hawaii – but her favorite place was Soldotna, Alaska, where she spent two months each summer at the family cabin on the Kenai River.

Family & friends will remember her kindness, her love of family, her work ethic, her creativity and her stubbornness. She was a great cook, and some of us were lucky enough to be beneficiaries of her spectacular lemon pies, made from the giant lemons that grew on the Swan Island property. All who knew her have been enriched by the experience, and all her friends and family mourn the loss of this very special woman. Her greatest heartaches were the loss of husband Nick in 2007 and her son Ted in 2013.

She is survived by her daughters, Nancy Gitts Yeoman and Victoria Gitts Ellis; sons Nicholas and Gary; 13 grandchildren; 19 great-grandchildren; and her sister, JoAnne O'Connor.

The ADS is grateful to the Gitts family for their support in many ways, and as Benefactor Members for over two decades. A celebration of life will be held from 11am – 1pm Wednesday, June 8, at the Willamette Valley Country Club in Canby. In lieu of flowers, remembrances may be made to Bristol Hospice, 10365 SE Sunnyside Road, Clackamas, OR; Alzheimer's Association, 1650 NW Naito Parkway, Portland; or Thelma's Place, 352 NW 2nd Avenue, Canby, OR 97013.

Please sign the online guestbook at www.oregonlive.com/obits