

# Tribute to Mary Lou Smith

*from the editors*

*Mary Lou Smith, the founding editor of Sprintsail, retired last December. She was honored at a gala party at the Woods Hole Museum in December at which she was given a book filled with tributes to her lifetime of creativity and accomplishments. The Falmouth Selectmen issued a Proclamation declaring Mary Lou Smith Day in recognition of her contributions to the community. Here are a few excerpts from the collection of tributes honoring Mary Lou:*



Judy Stetson, chair of the *Sprintsail* editorial board, and Jennifer Gaines, Executive Director and Curator of the Woods Hole Historical Museum, flank Mary Lou and Paul Ferris Smith at the gala party honoring Mary Lou last December. Photo by Susan Pennington.

To: Mary Lou Smith - Wife, Mother, Grandmother, Historian, Impassioned Advocate, Author, Skier, Sailor, A Guiding Light of Falmouth's Historical Ethos, Force To Be Reckoned With, and All-Around Wonderful Lady

Dear Mary Lou,

My interest in Falmouth's history is almost entirely due to you. You've given posterity so much. *The Book of Falmouth* springs immediately to mind; only an obsessed person would put so much energy into such a project! And it was your original passion that drew me inexorably into the Highfield Hall project.

“It won’t take much of your time,” you said, “we just need a treasurer who can add and subtract.” “Sure,” I said, “no problem.” Well, there were a few problems along the way, but Highfield was saved, thanks in large part to your persistence. That same persistence has fueled countless other historical projects, large and small, in our community. Indeed, the town basks in the fierce glow of your protective light.

You are a person of great warmth and generosity of spirit, and we all feel it. This world is a better place because you’ve lived in it.

Yours, Susan Shephard

Dear Mary Lou,

Each time I begin a project for the Woods Hole Historical Collection and feel in need of inspiration, I turn to one of the many books and/or 30 plus issues of *Spritsail* that you have edited. I always find new appreciation for all the work you have produced for the WHHC and the Town of Falmouth and admire anew how high you set the bar for all who have participated in your projects. How proud you must be of this legacy!

The most important gift you have shared with all of us is your deep respect and love for the history and beauty of this special place we call home.

Fondest regards, Helen Wilson

As one who has usually suffered adversarial relationships with editors and publishers, I wish to take this opportunity to commend Mary Lou Smith for her superb leadership and her editorial board for their unusual competence in producing *Spritsail*. *Spritsail* is a journal in the best senses. I suspect that almost all of its subscribers really read almost all of its articles. That is a claim that few journals can make honestly. Under Mary Lou’s leadership, *Spritsail* stands out as broad-minded in both time and space, fascinating, informative, and strikes emotional chords for the great many people who have known and loved Woods Hole, wherever they may be.

With best wishes, Jim Mavor

Dearest Mary Lou,

You have been a formative, informative, wonderful friend and mentor ever since I came to Falmouth as a new bride in 1960. Thank you for involving me in some of your many ventures. I must have been the least competent of the workers you enlisted to remodel Bradley House into the Woods Hole Museum!

You heard many requests for a history of Woods Hole while you were working at the Woods Hole branch of the Market Bookshop in the 1970s. So you set out to persuade your friends

and neighbors to write a book about Woods Hole. *Woods Hole Reflections* was a triumph, and you had just begun what was to be an illustrious career as an editor.

When *Woods Hole Reflections* was published in 1982, you told us that Falmouth itself would be 300 years old in 1986. How about repeating the successful format of WHR on a town-wide scale? Thanks once again to your editorial expertise and your vision, *The Book of Falmouth* was published on time with a big party at the Cape Codder Hotel. It was another, even larger triumph.



Mary Lou Smith, April 1994. Photo by Paul Ferris Smith.

Your Foreword to *The Book of Falmouth* expresses its purpose beautifully, “My hope, and the hope of all those who have worked on this Tricentennial *Book of Falmouth*, is that we can keep the diversity of our town alive, continue to respect one another’s differences, and preserve the beauty of Falmouth before it is lost to uncontrolled growth and pollution of its clear air, sparkling ponds, and shining sea.”

And then came almost 20 years of *Spritsail*. Your ability to conjure manuscripts from every corner of town and every era of its history was a continual source of amazement and pride as issue after issue appeared. Your editorial hand became even more sure; your vision even more compelling. Thank you for all you have contributed to your town and to your friends.

Judy Stetson

Dear Mary Lou,

It's been a few years since we worked together on *Spritsail*, but your enthusiasm for the journal, passion for editing, and love of Woods Hole, its history, and its people are all fresh in my mind.

Your careful attention to detail, thoughtful research, and keen ability to select just the right photograph for a cover or chapter are hallmarks of a skilled editor. Through the years as *Spritsail* editor and your work on *The Book of Falmouth* and *Woods Hole Reflections*, you have captured, preserved, and shared the history and very essence of life in Woods Hole with thousands of readers. Your work is cherished by all who know and love the journal and the books and will, no doubt, be cherished by generations to come.

Congratulations on your many wonderful accomplishments over the years. Best wishes for a happy retirement!

With fond regards, Pam Clapp Hinkle

Dear Mary Lou,

For someone who is seldom at a loss for words, I'm having a hard time finding a way to express my feelings of sadness that you will be retiring from the *Spritsail* board and thanks that you had the faith in me to ask me to do the impossible - fill my father-in-law's shoes on that board.

When you and Paul were Bruce and Ema Chalmers' great friends I admired you for your incredible contributions to Woods Hole and Falmouth as leaders who envisioned what you could accomplish and went about making it happen. You and Paul embraced my in-laws and led them into an involvement with local history that they treasured. You enhanced their lives immeasurably and mourned their deaths with us. When Bruce was dying he was anxious to see you to thank you for all you had given him and to say good-bye. At our family's request you wrote and presented beautiful tributes to Bruce at the celebration of his life. You were true friends.

I never dreamed that you would become my friend too, but you welcomed me into your life and encouraged me to join you and your colleagues on the *Spritsail* board. Though my style was entirely different from my father-in-law's, I became comfortable with you and discovered that I had some talents to offer. Thank you for nurturing those talents and allowing me to help ease you and *Spritsail* into the computer age. While I'm sure you often felt I was a thorn in your side, I hope you also felt my love and respect for you.

We will always welcome you at *Spritsail* meetings and look forward to seeing you at lectures, concerts, programs, parties and around town.

With love and all my best wishes, Janet Burt Chalmers