

Edie

By Gail Grenier Sweet © 2004

I met her in 1981, when I moved in two doors down the road from her home. She was a youngish old lady then, and she stayed a youngish old lady for the 23 years I've known her and her husband, George (a youngish old man).

Her name was Edith Schneider, and she died June 6, the day after their 67th wedding anniversary.

She was the neighbor you wish you had: never nosey, always cheerful, always glad (and pleasantly surprised) to see you.

Edie and George were a quiet institution in Menomonee Falls. They spent many years delivering alert systems to senior citizens. They installed the systems and explained their use. Often I'd see them on their way to a call, wearing identical biker jackets, zooming along on their big touring Harley, tall George in front, tiny Edie in back.

My kids soon learned that Edie was the architect of what she called "aggravation cookies" — cookies so delicious it was an aggravation to manage to stop eating them. There were always some on hand, fresh or in the freezer. (Edie never could have kept her slim shape had she gobbled them all down herself.)

Sometimes my husband and I would wander across the back yards on a sultry evening to visit George and Edie when we'd see them out burning brush. We'd stand close to the fire to avoid the mosquitoes, talking and laughing about nothing important.

Edie and George shared the work of a large garden and a huge yard. I often saw her hauling water to the vegetables, in watering cans. My most vivid picture of Edie, however, is that little lady pushing a lawn mower. George would be doing grass rows with his vintage tractor, while Edie did trim work. She was still pushing that mower last summer, when she was 86 and 87 years old.

She fought cancer on and off for the past few years. She put up with more obnoxious treatments and their aftermath than I think I would have had the guts to do. She was not ready to leave.

But she left, finally. She took one last look at all the flowers in her yard, went inside, shut her eyes, and was gone the next day. She left, I know she had to leave, but I'm sure going to miss her. And oh, what will George do without his Edie....

The End

[This was published as a column in *The Menomonee Falls News*.]