

Rhonda Rae Elke was born in Watrous to Paul and Joan Smorodin, a younger sister for Jason. Rhonda lost her dad at the early age of 6, which, no doubt contributed to her independence and strong will; some would even say stubbornness. Even at the early age of three, Rhonda would have to change her clothes 3 times a day, much to the frustration of her babysitters!

Jason and Rhonda learned to do many things out of necessity. Their mom worked long, hard hours to support her children while working at her businesses either at the beach or in Watrous. In those days it was so true that it took a village to raise a child. Rhonda and Jason, along with other kids, were often seen hitch hiking to the beach at all times of the day either for work or just to hangout. When just hanging out at the beach, Rhonda would be in and out of the pool throughout the day. At the young age of 7, she could be seen swinging from the acrobatic rings high above the water. Her love of water also meant many parts of the summer were spent at the farm with Uncle Vern and Aunt Doris and swimming at Etter's Beach. Those times spent playing with her cousins were always a special memory.

Rhonda also loved her hockey. At an early age she decided to register herself to play, only for her mother to find out hours later when shopping downtown! Rhonda was good at hockey too, despite having to use an old pair of her Uncle Dwight's skates as a starter set! Once older, she joined ringette because other fathers were tired of Rhonda being better than their boys. Many solid friendships were developed during this time in ringette and remain strong today. Rhonda passed her love of hockey on to each of her kids and now her grandkids.

Rhonda started to play ball at age 13 with her mother. One day her mom's team was short a player and Rhonda stepped up. She never quit playing from that day on and played with both the Watrous and Jansen ladies' teams. The only downfall to playing at such a young age was that one car was forced to go straight home after the game with the under aged minor!

Rhonda worked hard to earn some money to purchase the things she wanted. She shoveled snow at the Royal Bank before school, collected bottles at the drive-in and later ran the projector at the theatre.

From a young age, Rhonda had a love of horses. Her first horse was Prince, who she purchased from the Snells. He became her best friend and she would spend hours a day with him. When Rhonda went to Olds College, she exercised horses in her spare time. Following high school, Rhonda spent time in Texas and Germany helping to train horses.

Rhonda returned home with a new set of priorities. She soon had a little boy, Jordan, come into her life. For several years she worked summers at Paul's Place, her brother and mother's famed restaurant. In the fall she would go back to Olds College where she earned her Land Agents Diploma.

It was at Paul's Place that she met Bruce, who of course impressed her with his generous tipping! Their relationship was strained somewhat when Rhonda pulled up to find Bruce drinking Spanish coffees with another woman - his soon to be mother in law! However with this behind them, they were married on April 2nd, 1993 in Jansen. They settled on the family farm in 1994 when Bruce's parents moved to Lanigan. Rhonda was always so thankful for how the community of Jansen accepted her and Jordan. She was also thankful for the relationship that Grandpa Ervin and Jordan developed. Bruce and Rhonda soon had Charlie in 1995 and Dylan in 1996 just a year and three days apart.

With Ervin's passing in 1995, Bruce and Rhonda farmed together, often with a car seat in each tractor when needed. Rhonda loved the farm, whether it was operating a tractor, a combine, a grain truck, running for parts, gardening or doing yard work. She loved being outdoors and took great pride in both her yard and her house. She was one of those who couldn't leave the farm without it being clean, so she didn't have to come home to a mess.

With now being on their own farm, another horse was not far behind. Coy was purchased and he took up any of her spare time. Charlie also took up riding and took part in gymkhana with Rhonda's help.

From day one, it seemed Rhonda's motto was 'Have Wheels, Will Travel.' Like the time she took Dylan, Charlie and Sawyer to Ituna to ride sheep at the rodeo. It didn't matter where, it was just 'Let's go!!' And it served her well whether she was running for sports, parts, Kinettes or just to spend a day in the city.

Rhonda was involved with coaching Jordan's early ball and Dylan's early hockey. She served with the Church Council, the Jansen Community Club, the School Community Council or wherever she was needed. However, Kinettes was where many of her local friendships began and were solidified. She served on the executive and was always there to do her part. It was also from this that she had the opportunity to serve on the Telemiracle 29 Committee as Souvenir Chairperson. Working on that committee was a wonderful experience for her and added yet another set of friends to her life.

As you know or can tell, Rhonda was very active throughout her life. She continued that with her kids as their involvement grew in the community of Jansen and beyond. She was very proud of her children - Jordan, Charlie and Dylan. And despite taking a long time to accept being called Grandma, she was so happy when Shelby and Jordan brought Kash and Blayne into her life. They were precious to her. It was devastating for her when her disease gradually took all the things she loved to do away from her piece by piece.

Rhonda entered Manitou Lodge in April 2017 as a respite patient. It soon became apparent that the care she required would not allow her to move back home. She entered palliative care on Sunday, January 28th and passed away peacefully, on her own terms, with her family at her side, on the morning of January 30th, 2018.