



*"Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."  
~ Daniel 12:3*



**Reception to Follow Interment**  
Sneider & Sullivan & O'Connell's  
Reception Room  
977 South El Camino Real  
San Mateo, California

## *In Loving Memory*



*Judith Joan Brown*  
*August 1, 1943 ~ December 22, 2025*

Judith Joan (Smith) Brown was born August 1, 1943, to Charles and Lois Smith, a loving family of English descent, as one of five siblings. She grew up in their beautiful home on Palm Ave, San Mateo, a home she would later share with her own family until her passing.

She met her future husband, Don Brown, at the Millbrae Drive-In, at the age of 17. It was love at first sight, and they married on August 31, 1964. They had 61 years of a strong and loving marriage.

Judy attended San Jose State for her Bachelors Degree and College of San Mateo to receive her early childhood education teaching credential. She began her career as a kindergarten teacher at Ponderosa Elementary School in South San Francisco, where she taught for 20 years. In her own words, "I dreamed about being the best Kindergarten teacher I could be while having the most wonderful time with 5 year olds." And her dream came true. Judy was a gifted and innovative educator.

While teaching kindergarten, she strove to find ways to assist children to learn to read and developed the Alphaphonics system with two educator friends, whom she worked with at her school. They travelled the country to promote this new system. It was designated by the Department of Education as an exemplary teaching and learning program for kindergarteners to learn to read, and was used in all 50 states.

Judy's dedication to children's education grew as she went back to school to receive her Masters of Education at San Francisco State and became the Principal at the Spruce Avenue Elementary School in South San Francisco. There she was an outstanding leader for 21 years before retiring in 2008.

Throughout her administrative career, she worked tirelessly to support children, parents and teachers. Her dream of supporting not only children in kindergarten but also teachers of kindergarten came true in the 1980s. Together with a group of dedicated educators, she organized the first Bay Area Kindergarten Conference, which a few years later, in 1988, became the California Kindergarten Association, which still exists today. This Association has supported and developed thousands of kindergarten teachers around the state, leading to a better and more nourishing education of our youngest learners. In honor of Judy's work and legacy, the Association bestows an annual Judy Brown Administrator Award, which recognizes administrators who exemplify outstanding leadership and exemplary support of early childhood educators.

Of greatest value in Judy's life and her greatest gift was the adoption of her beloved lonela. In 1998, Judy and Don brought lonela, their beautiful daughter, home from Romania, loving her deeply. Every day, Judy gave of herself tirelessly to ensure lonela had every resource, every support, and most importantly, her own confidence to overcome any challenges and thrive. She was endlessly encouraging and gave wonderful and wise advice.

lonela remembers long cuddles, cooking together, enjoying Judy's favorite candy, See's chocolates, and laughing together with her amazing mother. She will always have Judy in her heart.

Judy passed away in her sleep on December 22, 2025, after bravely fighting a variety of illnesses. She is survived by her brother Morey and sister Sally, nieces and nephews, and her husband and daughter.

Judy will be missed by her family, friends, and colleagues, and especially by her beloved lonela and Don. She was and always will be a joy for her family, a mentor for young children, an inspiration for educators, and an angel to all.

*"Have you ever been so fortunate to have had a dream come true and turn out even better than you had wished possible?"*

*I have. As in my dreams, my life has been filled with serendipity – the gift of finding something of value."*

*~Judy Brown, at being honored by the California Kindergarten Association, 2007*

### **Visitation Service**

4:00 p.m. ~ 9:00 p.m.

Tuesday ~ January 6, 2026

Sneider & Sullivan & O'Connell's Funeral Home  
San Mateo, California

### **Funeral Service**

12:00 p.m.

Wednesday ~ January 7, 2026

Sneider & Sullivan & O'Connell's Funeral Home  
San Mateo, California

### **Interment**

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday ~ January 7, 2026  
Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery  
1500 Mission Road  
Colma, California