

## Diana Smith Brown



Diana Brown was born into an affluent family in Enumclaw, WA with Norwegian and Swedish roots in 1947. Rufus Smith, Diana's father, was one of Enumclaw's esteemed bankers, while her mother, Helen Smith, had ambitions of her own before getting married. Rufus was the only surviving son of JJ Smith and Selma Hanson. Selma was the daughter of Carl and Anna Hanson who owned and ran the White River Lumber Company, which was a predecessor to the Weyerhaeuser Company. Helen grew up in Sacramento, CA and met Rufus in the library at the University of Washington. Helen, not to be denied her thirst for knowledge and independence, resisted Rufus' initial attempts to pursue a relationship and struck out on her own for Europe to study linguistics in Germany. Diana and her mother enjoyed telling the story of how Helen had studied in Berlin in the 1930s under a certain professor who would later become infamous: the Nazi propaganda master Joseph Goebbels. Diana and her family were both fascinated and horrified by how the human mind could so easily be swayed with propaganda.

Diana was born to Helen and Rufus Smith in the late 1940's. Her father, Rufus, was initially a lawyer in Seattle but moved with his young family to Enumclaw to learn the banking industry while her mother, Helen, became a local philanthropist and socialite on the plateau. Diana had a happy and joyous childhood growing up in the small community in the shadow of Mt. Rainier with a large family support system nearby and numerous friends and cousins happy to join her playing Muffy dolls. In her grade school and high school years, she spent time in private all girls' boarding schools in both Portland and Seattle. Diana and her older sister Suzanne spent their childhoods camping with family in the Cascades—or what could more accurately be described as “glamping.” The Smiths' got out in nature but still liked to be comfortable. Diana enjoyed the outdoors but, as she grew into her 20's, came to prefer ballroom dancing. Even studying for five years under Ed Long and serving as his classroom dance partner to demonstrate proper form to other students.

When she was just 18, Diana received the unfortunate news that she would never be able to have children due to complications during her birth. This devastated her and influenced her life forever. She returned home to Enumclaw, WA, from college in Illinois to undergo surgery to treat the neurological condition that had her losing consciousness unexpectedly. The doctor seemed certain in his judgment of infertility. But over a decade later, at the age of 29, Diana would become pregnant with her first child, Matthew—her miracle baby, as she called him—and would eventually give birth to three more beautiful children: Aaron, Sarah, and Stephen-The Family Baby. Having a large family was a boon for Diana, as she is a natural nurturer. She raised her four children—three of them boys—on a big, white farmhouse on two acres in the small town not far from Mt. Rainier. Her then husband, Michael, worked in Seattle for the EPA, also took to the country lifestyle raising rabbits on the side and selling their meat—a hobby that Diana despised but tolerated. Diana was always on the move, tending to the four children whom she would later call her biggest accomplishments. Interestingly, it was in the Cascade Mountains, close to where she grew up, where she achieved one of her most important goals by conquering one of her greatest fears during a mountaineering course offered by the Washington Alpine Club. She climbed Mt. Si in North Bend, WA and, on another hike, even lowered into a crevasse. She recalls vividly the never seen before deep blues of the glacier and the solitude the expansiveness provided within the glacier. She pushed her limits like she never thought she could and was always proud of having done so. In fact, when it was time for her to be pulled from the crevasse, she remarked that she didn't want to leave and instead wanted to stay even longer.

If Diana's life could be distilled into one idyllic place, it would be the family's cabin on pristine Lake Sawyer. The three-story house with a large stone fireplace and a long dock running far into the lake, where she would go row boats with her father, was a hub for the large Smith and Hanson clan, as over a hundred family members would gather for the annual Easter-egg hunt, and later for Helen and Rufus' 50th Wedding Anniversary. As she got older and had children, one moment Diana particularly enjoyed every year for Easter was watching her children and all the cousins' march around the cabin as Ralph Munro, the former Secretary of State in Washington, puffed on the bagpipes. Diana loves her friends, good community and her family. One thing that has always been true for her is her devotion and commitment to the Christian faith. At times throughout her life, as do many of us, she stumbled and fell through the trials and tribulations life challenges each of us to overcome. Every time she needed support, her family has been there to help pick her up and Jesus has been there to walk with her. One of the most beautiful things about this woman is that even through her life challenges; she always found a way to be there for her children as a pillar of support when they needed her. She is a woman who is empowered by her love of others and the happiness it brings to her - A truly blessed creature of God.