

## About Helen Smith

There was never a hair out of place on Helen Smith from her white gloves to her pillbox hats. She graduated from Smith College with what was believed to be the highest IQ of any student up to that point. With a Ph.D. she headed the Vocational Advisory Service in New York. She met Charlotte Perry at Smith College. Charlotte first noticed her during a Literature Studies Class where Helen's Essay 'Reflections from the Third Row Back' was read anonymously by the teacher. Charlotte knew immediately who had written the essay. On her way out of class, Helen hissed, "if you tell anyone I wrote that, I'll kill you." After that, there was an immediate friendship. Helen came from a family who could not afford to send all of their children to college, so they sent their son. Helen worked teaching to pay her way through college. She scolded Charlotte, "You are lucky you have no knowledge of the realities of ordinary people. If you did, you would never be able to dream such big dreams." Helen had come from a poor family and had seen poverty up close.

She and Charlotte were best friends and she was also the glue that held Charlotte and Portia together. She was the only one who could help them see the other person's side and made all people feel important and heard. Her ability to moderate situations became a critical element in helping camp run smoothly. She didn't let her primness stop her from adventuring - she joined Charlotte and Portia in her white gloves to float from Lily Park to Echo Park (Pat's Hole) on the Yampa to test the waters for a new camping excursion.

Helen was instrumental in helping Portia find a university to take over P-M when they wanted to sell the camp. After the sale, Helen partnered with Portia to open Perry-Mansfield Boys Camp where they were co-directors.

Her talent was to make everyone around her feel seen and heard. She was a guiding force, respected by all but never wanted to be given credit for her accomplishments. She wanted others to shine so she spent her life lifting the people around her up to be the best they could be. She was the dash between Portia and Charlotte, the glue that held camp together.

**By Dagny McKinley, Author of *Perry-Mansfield Performing Arts School & Camp: A History of Art in Nature*.**