

Everyday Women of Sitka: Jo Cropley



- **Can you please tell me a little about yourself? How long have you lived in Sitka? What types of things are you involved in here?**

This August, it will be 42 years that I have lived here. I used to live in Seattle, and just sort of got burned out on the big city. I was really interested in Northwest Native Art and was taking classes in Seattle. Someone said you should go to Sitka, they have a really good culture. So I jumped on a plane, didn't

know anybody and came here, and stayed. I watch kids, grandkids, joined the quilters group I like that. I am taking up quilting and sewing. When we had the store, we were real involved with community things. Lately, it is like more just volunteering and when I know there is something that needs to be done. Really, I am just spending time with the grandkids right now is what I am doing the most. It is fun.

- **What is your biggest struggle right now?**

I think trying to find where you fit in after doing something for so long. We had the store for 36 years and that sort of identifies who you are. First you are somebody's wife, then somebody's mom. We had the store, so we were Sonny and Jo that owned the furniture store. And now just trying to find what the new me is. At first I really struggled with it, but now I am finding it is ok. I am finding new interests. I got back into sewing which is something that I haven't done for years and I am really enjoying that. And we do a lot of renovating of our own apartments and houses, having time together, having a lot more free time with friends, and just finding what the new me is and being able to label myself on what I am and what I am doing.

- **What makes you proud to be a woman?**

That I can multitask. I don't think men are very good at it, and I know that is labeling. I think you can hold a baby on your hip, and cook dinner, and be on the phone, and handle a crisis at the same time. And I live in an era where women can be and do whatever they want. And I was raised with no limitations and I think that was very liberal for my parents for the '50s when I was born. And I am very grateful for that because we were never told we couldn't, we were told of course you can.

- **Who was/is a female role model for you? Why?**

My mom- 100%. She is 98 years old. She had two babies. My dad went to war in 1942 and she had a week old baby and she had a two year old son, and she lived out in the boonies and didn't drive. And just the things she has gone through, the things she has seen, and how she is such a strong woman. When my dad passed, she just pulled up the bootstraps and carried on. She at 80 years old got a brand new house, and moved out of a family home that had been in the family for 100 years. And just strength. She showed strength.

- **Why do you think you were nominated to be featured on our Facebook?**

I have no idea. I really don't know. (Did you know Megan nominated you?) I figured that is who it was.

- **What does a normal "day in the life" look like for you?**

It has really changed, but now it is really pleasant, I mean it has always been pleasant. It is pretty laid back. We usually get up, and I have sort of created a little den for myself. I get up and have coffee and surf the internet, and then sometimes we are lucky enough to have babies pop in in the morning. And then we usually work on a rental together. One of our favorite things to do is to drive through and get a cup of coffee and talk about our day and what needs to be done. And then we are lucky enough to have some really good friends that we go and have lunch with 2 or 3 times a week, different friends. And start

dinner, and usually have anywhere between 2-6 people for dinner. Pretty laid back, pretty simple life. It is good.

- **Do you have something you'd like to say to other women in Sitka?**

I think that women have the tendency, at least I know that I used to, put limits up for myself. And I think that is real important to not put walls up and limits, and go ahead and experience and try. And don't be afraid to reach out and to ask for help. I always thought that I had to do everything myself, and finding out that people are more than willing to share and learn. The quilters group has taught me that more than anything. I always thought that I was not good enough to belong to a group that actually quilts, and they are warm and friendly and everyone is willing to share, and I am willing to share my knowledge on other things like houses and stuff like that. So I think reaching out and not feeling like we have to do it all, we can, but we don't have to.

- **What does being a strong woman mean to you?**

Independence, even though you are married, and a mom, and a grandma, and a daughter, and a sister; that you still are your own person. That you know who you are. And that when you believe in something, to be able to stand up for it and not be afraid to voice your opinion.