

Sandi Smith WAS A FIGHTER...

Sandi Smith finally lost a 40-year battle with cancer after an incredible fight to survive. Often when her plight seemed worst, she repeated her motto, "Never give up!"

She was a world class weaver and spinner. She was a founder of the Columbia Spinners and Weavers Guild. Twice she received the Lifetime Award from Handweavers Guild of America, given to only 25 people per year in the United States. She used her own natural dyes on yarns she spun by hand to create tapestries recognized throughout the nation. She spoke at national conventions, received national awards and was the subject of articles in national magazines and newspapers, including cover stories in the Columbia Daily Tribune in 1990 and 1997.

Her Lifetime Award works will be on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and the Nelson Art Gallery in Kansas City.

She was a devoted member of the Columbia Art League, helping the organization through its hard early times.

She taught for two years in Columbia Public schools, then another 13 years as an elementary art teacher at Hallsville R-IV, until she had to retire with her disability. She would not be stopped. For the last 10 years of her life when she was seriously impaired she produced hand made paper that is found in private collections across the country.

In 2002 she received First Prize at the annual Ramp Art exhibition, a fundraiser to provide public access facilities for disabled persons. Sandi was recovering from a debilitating stroke that seriously impaired her eyesight and caused her to use a walker. At the award ceremony she put aside her walker, made her way to the podium and returned her prize money to the Ramp Art organization saying the money should go to people who need it more.

That was the kind of person she was.

Her recognized accomplishments are many but her life can't be described so neatly. Ask her students by the hundreds who remember her so well. Ask people in the art community who were inspired and touched by her skill and personality. Ask the doctors and nurses who helped her over and over as she refused to give up.

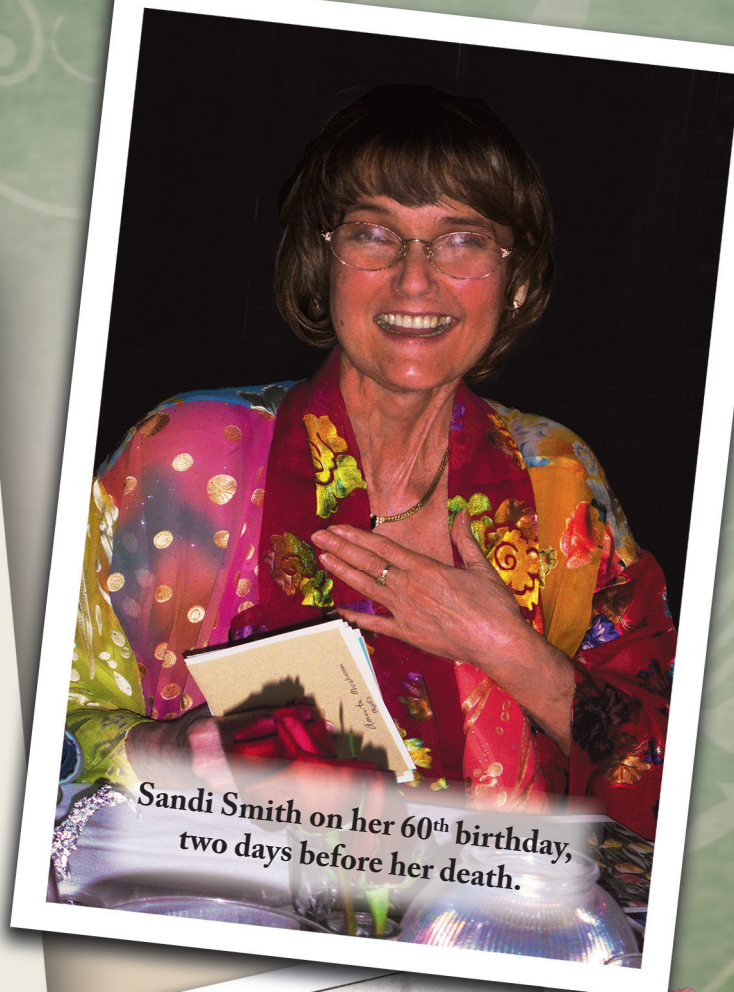
I am Mark Smith, her husband. For some years now I have realized Sandi was on a slowing glide path. Suddenly last week it was over. She was stricken at home with one more attack she could not overcome.

But only after that astonishing 40-year struggle. In 1967 she had her first bout with cancer, undergoing thyroid surgery. In 1988 she suffered the first of 6 strokes. In 1964 she had a breast lumpectomy (cancer). In 1998 she developed cancerous ovarian cysts. In 2002 a massive stroke left her with no speech, vision or ability to walk. She gradually fought back, never giving up. A year later one would never know she had a problem. Only two days before her final attack she celebrated her 60th birthday, with a big smile on her face.

Blue Herons transparency weaving by Sandi Smith. The piece is to be donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Finally, she deserves a rest. I am writing this message to give Sandi the recognition she deserves. I know all her friends join me in saying good-bye.

I have established the Sandi Smith Memorial Fund at the Boone County National Bank to help needy cancer victims with drugs and other needed expenses. An annual benefit art auction featuring works from Paul Jackson and other nationally known artists will help underwrite the fund.



Sandi Smith on her 60th birthday, two days before her death.



Sandi Smith with the portable spinning wheel she carried along to classes and demonstrations. Sandi spun and dyed her own yarn and was an accomplished weaver as well as a painter, paper maker and elementary art teacher.