



Susan H. Smith

April 29, 1944 - February 6, 2016

Susan H. Smith

Our darling, our muse. Giver of boundless love, life, encouragement, inspiration, art, and beauty. Susan Smith passed away on Feb. 6, at home in Kirkwood, from metastasized breast cancer. She was 71. Her effervescent personality was uplifting to be around, and she drew in friends, family, neighbors, and perfect strangers with her generosity and joyfulness, her gorgeous laugh, bubbly spirit, quick wit, and genuine warmth. Of course, if she were here now, Susan would play down these compliments, instead elaborating on how wonderful YOU are. She was unlike any other, our Susan, and she leaves behind countless people whose lives she impacted, and will miss her deeply.

Susan Heard Smith was born in Dyersburg, Tennessee in 1944 to Bonnie Spain and Donald Tibbs Heard. Her family moved to Tulsa, Oklahoma when she was a toddler. Growing up, she was creative and can-do, active in school social clubs like Tri-B and Damsels, putting on school dances, and making many lifelong friends. She often retold, with a laugh, how she got a report card noting that "Susan talks too much and does not respect authority." It was adopted as a sort of unofficial motto, as she was quite passionate and confident about her views. While bebopping and sock-hopping (she was likened to the girl in the song, "Chantilly Lace and a pretty face, and a ponytail

hanging down”), Susan graduated with honors from Will Rogers High School in 1962. As a fine art major at University of Tulsa, she was active in Delta Gamma sorority, president of the Panhellenic Council, and a member of the Mortar Board honor society among many other accolades. There she met Drew Spanogle, and the two were married after graduation in 1966. They moved to Kansas City, where Susan had been offered a job as an illustrator for Hallmark Cards, then a few years later to Pittsburg, Kansas, where Susan got a master’s degree in painting from Pittsburg State University. It was in a tiny studio/boutique behind their home that Susan began making and painting intricate dough ornaments for her business, “Flour Child”. She sold her personalized creations to department stores and at art bazaars, gathering a dedicated following.

All her life, she had a desire to “make pretty,” she simply loved to decorate, arrange, and surround herself with rare and interesting things. After moving to a mid-19th century home in Kirkwood in 1971, she feathered her nest with the most beautiful and fanciful hand-screened wallpapers, heirloom furniture nabbed at country auctions, antiques found during trips to Europe or little shops around town. Her own abstract expressionistic paintings hung alongside framed tempera artwork by her two children, Marcella and Andrew. She used her mother’s quilts as tablecloths at family gatherings, lacquered tables in high gloss paint, covered flocked Christmas trees with vintage glass ornaments and beads. She was without a drop of pretense or formality. Her style was as vibrant and memorable as she was, layered with pattern, color, art, and delightful details. It was no surprise that Susan’s home (and later, magnificent garden) was featured in house tours, newspaper articles, TV segments, and magazines both local and national.

In 1982, Susan married her Prince Charming and the love of her life, Steve Smith, an aerospace engineer and artist himself. They were a dream team. A couple who adored each other completely, complemented one another

perfectly, always side by side, often kissing, hugging, and personifying a loving marriage. Together, they reimagined their interior and exterior surroundings, creating a wonderland of plants, cockatiels, wirehair fox terriers, and inspiring spaces, including Susan's hand-lettered sentiment over the fireplace, "Fairy tales do come true." Their garden, with its winding brick pathways, waterfalls, and Steve's zenlike treehouse, became a showplace for countless varieties of irises, daffodils, tree peonies, magnolias, and exotic plants that overwintered in their greenhouse. Susan hand-painted garden tags for many of the plants in her elegant script, and tended to each little plant as if it were the most important one in the world.

Was there anything Susan couldn't do? Be it ice skating or ballet; the most challenging New York Times crosswords or bridge with dear friends; debates on politics, economics, religion, philosophy; powering through tennis rallies or dancing in Christian Louboutin stilettos to Motown's greatest hits, she grabbed life with total gusto. She stitched intricate needlepoint pillows. Sautéed gourmet meals with love. Wrapped packages for gift occasions with supreme attention to beauty and detail. You could not throw away one of her cards or hand-written notes! Every word was so carefully chosen and unusually rhymed, and would suit its recipient to a tee. Susan was a writer, stylist, and story producer, contributing to many articles for Mary Engelbreit's Home Companion magazine. A member of the Rowena Clarke Garden Club, she hosted beautiful luncheons and really got a kick out of sharing the love of plants and gardening know-how with this fine group of ladies. Susan and Steve enjoyed walking their dogs, Kip and Bonnie, all through their neighborhood, stopping to talk to friends and neighbors along the way.

Susan is survived by her husband, Steven P. Smith; her children, Marcella Spanogle Hawley (Doug Scronce), and Andrew Spanogle; step-children Melissa Cook and Amanda Kreider (Tim); grandchildren Lulu and Finn

Hawley, Chloe Cook, Sylvia and Clara Scronce; brother Donald T. Heard Jr. (Joan); nieces Pam Sawatski (Bill), Bonnie Marquez, and Elizabeth Moran; and her mother-in-law, Jean Smith. The memory of Susan's radiant smile and loving nature lives on in the hearts of all she touched. A celebration of her life will take place at home, when her garden is grown out later this year. Family will provide notice. Contributions in Susan's name may be made to World Vision, or to the charity of your choice.

Tribute Wall



“ *Susan H. Smith*

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