

Donna Watson

East Alton | Sunday, August 25 2013

Donna M. (Smith) Watson 76, died at 7:12 am on Sunday, August 25, 2013 after a courageous battle with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and congestive heart failure.

She was born Donna Mae Smith to Wiley E. and Ethel (Rigney) Smith Jr. on May 5, 1937 at Christian Welfare Hospital in East St. Louis, IL.

She attended Dupo Community High School and graduated May 27, 1955. Donna enlisted in the United States Army on April 25, 1957 and completed her basic military training at Fort McCellan, Alabama on July 3, 1957. Pvt. Donna M. Smith qualified in the Teletype Operation Course in the U.S. Army Southeastern Signal School in Fort Gordon, Georgia on August 30, 1957. She received the Good Conduct Medal during her service and was a member of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) until her honorable discharge April 24, 1959, achieving the rank of Specialist 4. Donna was proud that she served her country. Being a veteran became especially important to her in her later years.

On August 26, 1960 she married George E. Watson at the First Baptist Church in Wood River, Illinois. He preceded her in death on July 29, 1982.

Her most cherished memories were that of helping her mother raise her younger siblings, Sarah "Cindy" and Elsa and then when she became a mother raising her own children. She spent many summers at Van Preter Park in East Alton, watching her daughters and sons play softball and baseball. She felt her greatest achievements were that of her and children and grandchildren. Donna believed in the importance of education, graduating from Lewis and Clark Community College in 1973 with an Associates of Arts degree with honors. She had an inherent love of politics and often

shared her earliest memories of listening to both the Democratic and Republican conventions on the radio as a small child. Her interest in politics continued into adulthood as Donna served as a Republican Precinct Committeewoman in the early 1970s. Donna was employed as a Mental Health Technician IV at the Alton Mental Health Center, retiring in 1999.

She is survived by two daughters, Stacia (Leonard) Woods of East Alton and Donna (Steven) Pantone of Godfrey; two sons, Todd (Erin) Watson of East Alton and Maxx (fiancé Jeanette Kassay) Watson of Highland; her grandchildren, Rigney Sanders, Matthew Sanders, Donna “Toni” Pantone, Megan Watson, Zackary Watson, Braydon Hensley, Jacyn Watson, Emily Watson, Parker Watson, Reily Kassay and Christian Kassay; two sisters and their spouses, Sarah “Cindy” (Daniel) Robien of East Alton and Elsa (James) Lewis of South Roxana, as well as her nieces, nephews, great nieces and nephews who will always remember their Aunt Donna.

In addition to her parents and husband, she was preceded in death by her maternal grandparents, Edward and Anna Rigney and paternal grandparents, Wiley E. and Elsa M. Smith.

As per her request, there will be no visitation and graveside services will be private with full military rites and interment at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, MO.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to St. Jude Children’s Hospital.

Elias, Kallal & Schaaf Funeral Home in Bethalto is in charge of arrangements.

Online condolences and guest book may be found at www.eliaskallalandschaaf.com