

Pamela Newton Smith

Pamela Jeanne Newton Smith of St. Simons Island, Georgia, died peacefully at Hospice of the Golden Isles in Brunswick, Georgia on October 16, 2019 after a two-year battle with frontotemporal dementia. Pamela, the older of two daughters, was born on November 1, 1948 in Savannah, Georgia, to Alice Jackson Newton and Savannah photographer, James Byron Newton, Jr. She was preceded in death by her parents.

Pamela graduated from Herschel V. Jenkins High School in Savannah in 1965 and was awarded a music scholarship to Wesleyan College in Macon, Georgia, where she studied piano under Naegeli von Bergan Metcalf. After receiving a Bachelor of Music degree in Piano Performance in 1969, she married the love of her life, Savannah native, Michael Smith, and moved to North Carolina. There she taught private piano lessons as well as pilot Kindermusik classes under the supervision of founder, Lorna Lutz Heyge. In 1980, she and her family, which by then included two young sons, moved to Atlanta. She became interested in the Suzuki Piano Method and studied for many years, both in America and Japan, with Master Teacher, Haruko Kataoka.

As a founding member of the Atlanta Area Suzuki Piano Association, Pamela served as president, board member and event director. She organized numerous local and international workshops, often teaching as many as 200 students a year over her fifty-year career. Pamela showcased her own students in Japan and across the United States, arranging for them to perform in cultural exchanges of music while she advanced the work of the Suzuki Association through educational events, concerts and workshops. She invited special guest pianists, highlighted concerts for multiple pianos, and held graduation concerts semiannually at Spivey Hall at Clayton State University in Morrow, Georgia. Pamela's tireless advocacy on behalf of her legion of students exemplified one of her favorite mantras: "If you don't ask, the answer's always 'no'." In 2019, in recognition of Pamela's outstanding music teaching career, the Wesleyan College Alumnae Association presented her with the award for Distinguished Achievement in a Profession.

Along with her lifelong devotion to musical mentoring, Pamela's passions included writing, gourmet cooking, swimming, scuba diving, and traveling the world. She contributed articles to *Suzuki World*, *Piano Basics*, and *Nurture*. She studied fiction writing with award-winning Savannah author and writing coach, Rosemary Daniell, and for almost two decades was a vital member of Rosemary's Zona Rosa writing group in Atlanta. She published a children's book, *The Pond*, and completed two works of adult fiction, with another in the works. In 2017, her novel, *A Piece Gone Missing*, was awarded second place for the Hal Bernard Memorial Award for the Novel by the Southeastern Writers Association. In 2018, her novel, *The Devil in Dunwoody*, was selected as a short-list finalist for the prestigious Faulkner-Wisdom Competition in New Orleans.

In addition to her many sojourns to Japan for her Suzuki studies, Pamela's love of travel took her across America and around the world, to destinations as diverse as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Germany, Greece, Holland, Ireland, Jordan, Mexico and the Caribbean. She went scuba

diving in Cozumel, St. Thomas and Hawaii. She also made several trips to France and Italy, where she took cooking classes and prepared gourmet meals while on writing retreats with Zona Rosa. Regardless of whatever country she found herself in and whatever vehicle was available, Pamela was always the designated driver—she had a flawless sense of direction and the driving skills of a Le Mans champion. Having inherited her father’s photographic eye, she captured every trip and every occasion in stunning pictures. With her outgoing personality and generous spirit, Pamela made every meal an event and every gathering a party. And, one of her most profound—and unsung—acts of generosity was her decision, over a decade ago, to donate a kidney to her ailing sister-in-law.

Pamela is survived by her beloved husband of 50 years, Michael Eugene Smith, with whom she had retired to St. Simons Island from Atlanta in 2017. Other survivors include her sister, Kathy Newton Pigott (Jerry) of Louisiana, sons, Michael Todd Smith (Missy) of St. Simons Island, and Elliot Braxton Smith of Cumming, and her four grandchildren, Ada Newton Smith, Anne Braxton Smith, James Cole Smith and Katherine Lee Smith, as well as two nieces, one nephew and several cousins.

Following cremation, Pamela’s memorial service will be held at Holy Nativity Episcopal Church of St. Simons Island, on Saturday, October 19, at 2:00 p.m., after which the family will host a reception from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the King and Prince Hotel on St. Simons Island.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to be sent to the **Pamela Newton Smith Memorial Fund** at the Atlanta Suzuki Piano Association. Donations may be made through their website (atlantasuzukipiano.org/donation), or checks made payable to AASPA in memory of Pamela may be mailed to: Atlanta Area Suzuki Piano Association, 1740 Hudson Bridge Road, Suite 1134, Stockbridge, GA 30281.