



Stephanie Smither

May 4, 1941 - June 11, 2016

Stephanie Kerr Smither Obituary

Stephanie Kerr Smither, “Nana” will be remembered for her beautiful smile, loving her family, the marriage to her childhood sweetheart, inventive cooking, and always being the last to leave the party! She surrounded herself friends and beautiful objects, was wildly adventurous, fun loving, gracious and a courageous lady. Nana will be remembered for her big hugs, which she gave generously. Nana passed away June 11, 2016 at home surrounded by family and wearing her favorite turquoise rings.

Stephanie was born in Jacksonville, Texas, to Frankie Zou Gaston and Stephen Austin (“S.A.”) Kerr, May 4, 1941. Raised in Huntsville, Texas where her parents founded Kerr’s Department Store; she spent her days helping to run the store with the daddy she loved. As a young girl she learned the piano, enjoyed baseball and fell in love with her childhood sweetheart - John Henderson Smither. Their favorite place to “park” was Pritchett Pasture, now Interstate 45, where she helped John feed his cattle. Her sister Zou said, “it is hard to remember her before John!” They married while students at the University of Texas at Austin. John was in law school while Stephanie taught at the Texas School for the Deaf. Upon graduation, they moved to Stuttgart, Germany with their two children where John served in the Army. These were fond memories traveling Europe, in their VW bug with kids in the back. They

settled in Houston and raised three children. Stephanie was active in the Blue Bird Circle, The Houston Garden Club and Westminster United Methodist Church, though what she enjoyed most was staying at home supporting John and her children with their endeavors.

Stephanie, a “sophisticated hoarder” or (consummate collector), was always on the hunt for handmade and one-of-a-kind objects. She was known for her bright orange lipstick and big jewelry, without which she felt underdressed. She was also known for her creative tablescapes, beautiful penmanship, and famous Smither Salsa. With her East Texas accent, someone said, “Stephanie was the only person she knew who said ‘hush’ in four syllables”. At Christmas her house was filled with carved Santas, her tree covered in her handmade needlepoint angels and the smells of homemade fudge and peanut brittle on the stove. Nana stayed busy all year making the grandchildren’s Christmas stockings and their annual needlepoint ornaments.

She and John loved hosting dinner parties and she delighted in cooking scrumptious gourmet meals. They always ended the evening with Stephanie playing the piano barefoot while John and their beloved supper club of 50 years sang into the wee hours. Stephanie thought if people left her house before midnight it was a bad party!

Her favorite activities included cheering for her grandchildren at sporting events, being a “mean” liar’s dice player, taking her grandchildren to exotic places, playing Mah Jongg, and spending time with family and friends at Sunset Lake in Huntsville, Texas.

The family wishes to express their gratitude to her generous lung donor and his family, Houston Methodist Hospital, Dr. Scott Scheinin, Dr. Osama Gaber,

Dr. Thomas Kaleekal, Sydney Bridges and the staff for their heroic effort over the last 2 ½ years. She was able to fulfill her lifetime dream of overseeing the creation of Smither Park, gifting her art to The Menil Collection and completing a documentary about her years as a collector of Visionary Art. In addition, she was honored as one of Houston's 50 Most Influential Women of 2015 by Houston Woman Magazine and as the 2014 Texas Patron of the Year by Art League Houston.

We know Stephanie would also like to thank all the sweet supporters of Smither Park and the artists who were so dear to her. Thank you also to the staff at The Menil Collection who were so wonderful to work with on the current exhibition.

Stephanie felt blessed to spend her last two evenings at the celebration dinner and opening of her collection at The Menil. She was radiant and so touched by the public outpouring of support. Afterwards, family and friends returned to her home for her famous SmitherRitas. She had one last toast, retired to her room, and eased into her final slumber surrounded by family and friends with the joyous sounds of the party below.

She treasured her children and their spouses, John Kerr Smither, Ashley and Curt Langley, Paige and Todd Johnson, and her grandchildren who affectionately called her Nana: Amon Smither; Austin, Madison and Jack Langley; Wells, John David, Pierce, Hill and Blake Johnson; her sister and brother-in-law Zou Kerr and Boyd F. Cherry; sisters-in-law, Martha Smither and Trudie Smither, nieces and nephews, Robert Smither, Sallie Crotty, John Smither and Mary Kate Jefferies; great grand nieces and nephews Kate and Stephen Crotty and Cole Smither. She was preceded in death by her parents S.A. and Frankie Zou Kerr, her husband John H. Smither and two brothers-in-

law Robert B. Smither and Wilbur L. Smither, III.

The memorial service celebrating her life is Thursday, June 16th at 10 a.m. at St. Luke's United Methodist Church, 3471 Westheimer Rd, Houston, Texas. The graveside service will be held at 5:00 p.m. in Oakwood Cemetery located at 9th Street and Martin Luther King Drive in Huntsville, Texas. It was Stephanie's wish that everyone celebrate her life by wearing a bit of her favorite color, orange.

For those desiring, contributions in Stephanie's memory may be made to: Houston Methodist Hospital Foundation, P. O. Box 4384, Houston, TX 77210-4384 (in honor of Dr. Scott Scheinin for transplant research; Nora's Home for transplant patients and their families, 8300 El Rio St., Houston 77054 <http://www.norashome.org>, Smither Park, 2402 Munger, Houston, Texas 77004 <http://orangeshow.org>

Previous Events

Graveside Service

JUN 16. 5:00 PM (CT)

Oakwood Cemetery
Huntsville, TX

Tribute Wall



“ *Stephanie Smither*

November 15, 2022 at 08:33 PM