

Sandra Gail Ragland - 1940-2013

Ragland, Sandra Gail, age 72, died on March 29, 2013, Good Friday, in Louisville after an illness. She was born in Louisville on July 21, 1940 to Valerie and Alvin Tharp. She was a lifelong Louisvillian and longtime member of the First Baptist Church of Middletown.

Sandra ("Sondra" to her mother and her beloved Aunt Hazel and "Sandy" to everyone but her sons) was a talented and competitive artistic roller-skater as a teenager and graduated in 1958 from Manual High School. She was a member of XL Sorority. A top student, Sandra was a National Merit Finalist.

Sandy made a career as a legal secretary in the 1960's to attorney John Wise, among other positions. Her first son, Sean, was born in 1966. A second son, (Shannon), followed in 1968. She was a devoted mother and homemaker to her sons.

Following a divorce in 1990, Sandy returned to college as a freshman at the University of Louisville. She hoped that maybe . . . she could become a paralegal. Sandy exceeded those expectations and became a star student, spending the summer after her graduation studying at Oxford in England. It was a life and academic highlight.

Sandy then entered the law school at Louisville. She was devoted to the study of the law. Following her graduation in 1999 (at the tender age of 59), Sandy passed the bar. She successfully practiced domestic relations law in Louisville from that time until January of 2013 when she became ill. She was devoted to the law and more importantly, to her clients. She took their many burdens on her own shoulders as if they were her own. A fierce advocate for her clients, Sandy was also a gentle lawyer who won most points on grace, class and hard work. She inspired countless lawyers, young and old, with her inspirational story. . . you're never too old to follow your dreams. Her practice ranged from consultation to full-fledged trials to appellate practice before the Kentucky Supreme Court in several bellwether domestic relations cases.

While she only practiced fourteen years, Sandy packed a full-career into those years. She would recall a successful result when an adverse litigant remarked, "Well your lawyer ought to be good. She's been practicing forty years." At the time, Sandy, age 62, had been a lawyer for three years. She was very good at what she did.

Sandra practiced law with Diana L. Skaggs & Associates from 1999 to 2013. She was a member of the Louisville Bar Association, Family Law Section; Kentucky Bar Association, Family Law Section; and most dear to her heart, the International Academy of Collaborative Professionals and the Kentucky Collaborative Family Network, where she served as secretary since 2005. A brilliant writer, her published work includes articles on collaborative law and presumptions of paternity. She established new law in the Kentucky Court of Appeals by successfully briefing that "the three pony rule" should apply in large income child support cases; that is, child support should be based

on the child's needs and not automatically extrapolated beyond the child support guidelines (no child needs three ponies.)

She considered her work not only a career, but a calling, taking special interest in child custody cases and cases ending long-term marriages. A strong advocate of the collaborative approach to problem-solving, she encouraged her clients to attempt to maintain healthy relationships with ex-spouses, not only for the benefit of their children, but also for their own well-being. She was known among the family law bar for her collegiality, resolve, and wit.

Sandra served on the Board of Directors of Community Living, Inc., an organization whose mission is to enhance the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She also found serving as a volunteer mediator in Judge Paula Sherlock's court highly rewarding.

Outside of the practice of law, Sandy faithfully taught an adult Sunday School Class for many years. She was a voracious reader who loved books. Sandy was a straight-down-the-ticket Democrat and during her illness, she praised Obamacare. And even when she didn't feel well, she always coveted a chocolate malt and fried chicken.

Sandy is preceded in death by her parents, Valerie, Alvin and step-father, Cleo, favorite Uncle Willie and Cousin Sheila. She is survived by her sons, Sean (Becky) and Shannon (Denise); three grandchildren, Sydney, Reese and Woodford; and several special friends, Mary Jo, Mary Lou, Kathy, Kaye, Terri, Wilma and Diane.

Her memorial service will be conducted at the First Baptist Church of Middletown on Monday April 8th at noon with Pastor James Cobban presiding. Visitation precedes the service in the church sanctuary from 10:00 a.m.

Expression of sympathy in lieu of flowers made be made to the church's address at 11721 Main Street, Middletown, KY, 40243 for the building fund which Sandra supported.