



## **Dr. Vicki Straub remembered for unwavering humor, teaching excellence**

By Blake Nelson

Columbia Missourian

Published Oct. 2, 2015

COLUMBIA — Dr. Vicki Straub already had an impressive career when MU came calling.

She and her husband, James Straub, co-founded Columbia's first full-time private psychological center in 1976. A few years later, MU's Department of Family and Community Medicine asked her to join its faculty.

Dr. Straub was hesitant, but she figured that if teaching didn't work out she could always return to the counseling center she'd started with her husband.

But Dr. Straub's teaching career turned out just fine. She was her department's only non-physician to receive a teacher-of-the-year award, and she had a key role in developing MU's nationally recognized behavioral medicine training program.

Dr. Straub died at home Monday of breast cancer. She was 71.

When Dr. Straub was first diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer, doctors told her she had six months to two years to live.

"We'll see about that," her husband remembers her saying. That was almost a decade ago.

Dr. Straub learned how to paint with watercolors from her mother-in-law. After the breast cancer diagnosis, Dr. Straub's art pieces started featuring eagles and hawks instead of inanimate objects.

"She used that as a ... meditating tool," said Jason Straub, Dr. Straub's son. "Imagining raptors attacking her cancer."

Even as her health deteriorated, Dr. Straub's humor didn't waver.

A few weeks ago, Dr. Straub ran an errand with her daughter, Kirsten Marshall, on Thilly Avenue. Dr. Straub was receiving in-home care and hadn't left her house in some time. As soon as she got in the car, she adopted a lisp to match the street name.

"So while she's dying we were talking about how 'therious' everything was," Marshall said.

"She was 100 percent the most open, accepting, kind, non-judgmental person you could meet," Kirsten said. "She never said a bad word about anybody."

Dr. Vicki Straub is survived by her husband of 44 years, James; two children, Jason Straub and Kirsten Straub Marshall and her husband, John, of Columbia; two grandchildren, Aleda and Loretta Marshall; two brothers, Kevin and Ken Wickman; and a nephew, Carl Wickman. Dr. Straub's parents preceded her in death.

A memorial service at 3 p.m. on Sunday in the University Club Alumni Hall in the Reynolds Alumni Center, 704 Conley Ave. A visitation will be held from 2 to 6 p.m.

Donations can be made to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation or to the Columbia Art League. Condolences for the family can be posted on the Parker Funeral Service's website.

*Supervising editor is Daniela Sirtori-Cortina.*