

Barbara Smith: 'Warrior of peace' remembered

By Kendall Wilson
Tribune Staff Writer

She was called the "warrior," the "majestic angel of peace." the "ultimate organizer and peace-maker."



Barbara Ann Smith

Tributes — more than tears — flowed from family, colleagues, friends and admirers hailing from the broadest cross-sections of Philadelphia's civic and church communities, all of whom came out to honor the late, beloved WYBE-TV talk show host and co-organizer of the Million Woman March.

The mourners recalled how Barbara Ann Smith touched their lives during the celebration of her remarkable life this past Saturday at Second Macedonia Baptist Church, vowed why her legacy will live on.

Hundreds packed into the spacious church, filing into the pews below and filling the balcony above. Hundreds of others arrived earlier to pay their final respects.

"We've truly lost a warrior," community activist Leona Smith told the crowd.

Tyrone Reed, longtime head of the Committee for a Better North Philadelphia, added, "This is a huge, huge loss to Philadelphia, the country, to humanity."

Barbara Ann Smith, a grassroots activist who shared appearances with Jesse Jackson on the "Oprah Winfrey Show" passed away peacefully at her Center City home Aug. 4 after a courageous battle with breast cancer. She was 53.

Tributes, many in the form of resolutions, came from the City of Philadelphia, the Mayor's Office of Community Services (MOCS), organizers of the Million Women's March, Jobs With Peace, various churches and church committees, including Second Macedonia and from several community organizations.

"We're not here because Barbara Ann Smith died; we're here because Barbara Ann Smith lived," said one speaker, setting the tone of the moving tribute in her memory. "Her last breath ended in a smile. I know God is pleased with her."

From organizers of the Million Women March to the community-based and national and international organizations in which she made her presence known, praise echoed throughout the church from those given the honor of reflecting on their heroine. Sev-

eral letters of comfort were also read.

The Rev. Lucille Ijoy, pointing to Smith's role with the Million Women's March, told those in attendance, "You are all special. Barbara was one of you. She is gone now, but not really. So perk

Rep. W. Curtis Thomas. "Whether we met to deal with the sports stadium issue or the Million Women March, Barbara always stepped up to the plate. "She was about all women, but when she stood up for women, she stood up for all of us," he said. "The beauty of Barbara Ann Smith was that she gave you options. If you didn't have the courage to step up front, she'd smile and get you to do something else that will help the cause."

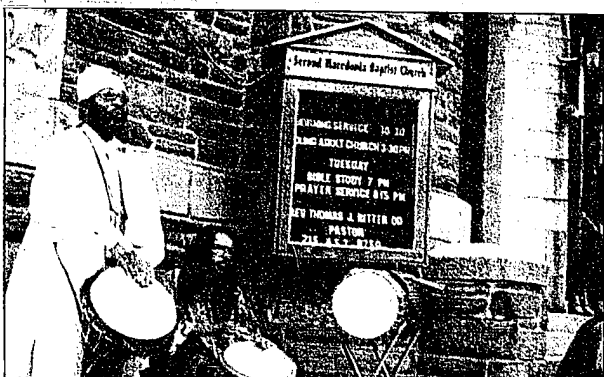
Special assistant to Mayor John F. Street Connie Little, who presented a resolution from the mayor and the City of Philadelphia said, "Barbara was my friend. Barbara Smith lives in each one of us, so we must continue her legacy. She fought for all of us. She was remarkable, her efforts Herculean. She labored tirelessly for all of us. Barbara was the ultimate fighter for human and civil rights."

Smith's mother, a longtime member of Second Macedonia, recalled fond memories of her daughter, drawing occasional laughter as she moved through her early childhood to teenage life to young adult to the ultimate status on the local, national and international plane.

"She was the angel of peace, the organizer of goodness," said the Rev. Thomas J. Ritter, pastor of Second Macedonia, who delivered the eulogy. "Nobody I know had a more electric smile. It said 'I love you, I care about you.' She was not hung up with small things. She was interested in people moving ahead. I'm grateful she came this way. We have to thank God for her memory, for sharing her with us."

Other expressions came from James Brown Jr., Najee Ali, church and community leaders, and family members.

Moving musical selections and



Drummers play outside Second Macedonia Baptist Church, in honor of Barbara Ann Smith, a "warrior." ABUL SULAIMAN PHOTO



Barbara Ann Smith and her daughter Gemma

solos were also rendered by family members.

Barbara Ann Smith is survived by her two daughters, Shawna and Gemma; her mother, Ella; father, Robert. Grandmother,

Juanita Morgan; four sisters, Juanita Wyns, Marcia Whitaker, Janice Myers and Tamara Smith; two grandchildren, Meekah and Samir; son-in-law, Dakvid Muhammad; brother, Leon Stew-

art; sister, Lisa Stewart; companion Rashid Al-Akbar; three brothers-in-law, five nieces, eight nephews, a host of cousins and countless numbers of friends and admirers.