



Ms. Deborah Jean Patton Smith

October 28, 1951 - April 20, 2026

***NOTE: Per request of the family of Deborah Jean Patton Smith, a cremation has taken place and a private service to celebrate her life is being planned for later date

A Video Tribute will be available on our website soon

The Obituary:

"A Life Well Lived"

Deborah Jean Patton Smith passed away on April 20, 2026. She was born on October 28, 1951, in Battle Creek, Michigan, the middle child of Jeanine and Daniel Patton, Jr. She was preceded in death by her beloved parents and her brother, Daniel Patton II.

Deborah attended Battle Creek Central High School, where her love for swimming led her to join the swim team, earning a varsity letter. Inspired by her parents, both dedicated educators, she pursued higher education at Western Michigan University, where she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Education, with a focus on Counseling and Personnel.

She began her distinguished career in education in the Grand Rapids Public Schools, and, at the age of 25, became one of the youngest principals in the State of Michigan. After relocating to Kalamazoo in 1978, Deborah continued

her academic journey, earning a Master's Degree in Counseling and Personnel. She served with excellence as a teacher, counselor, instructional specialist, and later as principal of Winchell Elementary School. Her commitment to lifelong learning led her to pursue a second master's degree.

Deborah devoted her life's work to ensuring that all children, regardless of their personal circumstances or economic background, received quality education. Her leadership and dedication ultimately led her to serve at the administrative level within Kalamazoo Public Schools, where she left a lasting impact on students, families, and colleagues alike.

In 1978, Deborah married Nathan Smith. They were married for 18 years, and from this union they were blessed with a son, Nathan Lamar, born in 1982. Deborah was a faithful member of Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church in Kalamazoo for many years. She was also an active and proud member of The Links, Incorporated, and a member of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated, where she cultivated lifelong friendships and contributed meaningfully to service and community initiatives.

In 2016, Deborah relocated to Florida, where she enjoyed several peaceful and fulfilling years. She found great joy in traveling, spending time with dear friends, and shopping. An avid swimmer throughout her life, Deborah especially loved the beach and being near the water.

Deborah leaves to cherish her memory her loving and devoted son, Nathan Lamar Smith. She is also survived by her sister, Denise Hobson (Robert); cousins Donna Odom, Michael Williams (Tiffany), Gina Kimbrough, and Jonte Kimbrough; her daughter of the heart, Sylvella Boggan, and her dearest friend of many years, Mariel Crutcher of Ruskin, Florida.

Her memory will also be treasured by her former sisters-in-law, Patricia A.

Smith of Baton Rouge, LA and Dawn Gardner Smith of Kalamazoo, MI, and a host of nieces and nephews in Baton Rouge, LA: Derek Thomas, Tealyta Crockett, Monique Smith, Tomako Smith, Chaketta Scott, Iscavate Hayes, Richarda Jones, Emanuel Smith, Scentelia Smith, and Shemietra Rogers.

Tribute Wall

BW

“ *Barbara Watson lit a candle in memory of Ms. Deborah Jean Patton Smith*



Barbara Watson - May 10 at 03:36 PM

PB

“ *Paul & Margaret Best lit a candle in memory of Deborah Patton Smith*



Paul & Margaret Best - May 01 at 06:54 PM

MR

“ My heartfelt condolences to the family of Ms Patton-Smith. Although I didn't know Ms Patton-Smith personally, I did know her father. Daniel Patton, Jr. replaced David Salters as principal at Lincoln Elementary school in Battle Creek, MI when I was in second or third grade. Mr.Patton called all the classes together to tell us that he would be taking a leave as he would be going to have surgery to remove a growth. He never returned. Mr. Patton was a wonderful mild and fair man. He was an exceptional educator and role model for his students. Reading Ms Patton-Smith obituary gives me joy in knowing that she followed in her father's footsteps. May God comfort and bless the family during this difficult time.

Sincerely,
Mary Ann Riley
Former Student of Daniel Patton, Jr

Mary Riley - April 27 at 11:38 PM

AS

“ Prayers are with the family 🙏



Anthony and Gwen Smith - April 26 at 11:43 PM

DF

“ May God Bless and Keep the Family. Daniel Family-Lillie, Patricia and Teresa



Daniel Family - April 25 at 10:12 AM

SW

“ *Selena Walker lit a candle in memory of Ms. Deborah Jean Patton Smith*



selena walker - April 25 at 09:35 AM

SM

“ *"In Loving Memory of a Wonderful Friend"*

Deb was a special gift to have as a friend.

Deep in our hearts, your life is kept to love, cherish and not forget.

The memories of you, Linda Gail and I will always be in our hearts.

Until we meet again!

Sharon Miller

Sharon Miller - April 24 at 09:40 PM