

In Memory of our dear Colleague and Friend, Nancy Zahniser, Ph.D.

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Nancy Zahniser PhD, professor emerita of pharmacology, passed away peacefully at home cared for by her beloved husband, Chris Wing, on May 5, 2016 at age 67 after being treated for glioblastoma. She retired from the University of Colorado School of Medicine in 2014, where she researched the brain function of dopamine receptors, and hoped to return to watercolors, particularly of wildflowers. A highly productive medical researcher of thirty-five years, Nancy was principal investigator on more than thirty peer-reviewed grants, published more than one hundred fifty papers and was internationally recognized for her research. She was given many distinguished awards, but excelled as a mentor and was gratified by the many students and postdocs she trained. Nancy was known to her students as "a fabulous balance of positivity and grit". She served five years as associate dean for research education in the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Nancy shared her joy for life with her parents, Cy and Mary Rutledge, her brothers Paul and wife Kathy, Mark and wife Catherine, and her nephews James and Nathan. She grew up in Chillicothe, Ohio, graduating from high school and then attending the College of Wooster for her undergraduate work. Nancy married her first husband, Mark Zahniser in 1971 in New Delhi, India where he served in the Peace Corps and she taught science at the Woodstock School in Mussoorie. Upon returning to the United States, she attended the University of Pittsburg where she received a PhD in 1977. In Colorado beginning in 1979 she and Tom Dunwiddie became companions and enjoyed a scientific and personal relationship until Tom's tragic death in Yosemite in 2001. They enjoyed many adventures and travels together. The extended Dunwiddie family has always cherished Nancy as "one of their own". Outside of science, Nancy lead an active lifestyle of backcountry skiing, hiking and wildflower photography. She met Christopher Wing late in 2001 and they married in 2006. Nancy and Chris enjoyed walks, bicycling, travel and joyfully undertook cooking and gardening as art forms; meals at their home were always special occasions. A recent high point last summer was visiting her Austrian "sister" in Linz, Helene Strasser, with whose family she'd been an exchange student in 1965, and with whom she'd remained a close friend for fifty years. It meant a great deal for her to make that trip. Many people have been touched by her grace, intelligence, generosity and joy of life. She was so lovely and bright, dedicated to science and exhibited a positive spirit that was infectious. Nancy will live on always in the memories of those who loved her. A celebration of her life will be scheduled in Colorado for later in the summer.