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## **Beth Drews, 1955-2010: Former marketing exec for Chicago Botanic Garden**

By Joan Giangrassie Kates, Special to the Tribune

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After six years in the marketing departments of subsidiaries of corporations such as Coca-Cola and Quaker Oats, Beth Drews moved to the Chicago area from California and spent time away from the office to become a stay-at-home mom.

When the longtime Oak Park resident returned to marketing in the late 1990s as co-director of membership with the Chicago Botanic Garden, she found the change — from working for a bottom-line driven company to an organization that was mission-driven — much to her liking.

And the reporter-turned-marketer, who had covered state politics in Arkansas when Bill Clinton was governor, was pretty good at it, too.

"During her eight years at the (Botanic Garden), membership rose from 25,000 to 45,000," said her husband of 22 years, Don.

In 2005, Mrs. Drews joined the Chicago firm Lipman Hearne, which does marketing for nonprofit organizations such as universities and charities.

"Beth was smart, energetic, kind and optimistic, but there was also this extraordinary calmness about her," said Rob Moore, a managing partner at Lipman Hearne. "I don't think I ever saw her flustered. Her attitude was always, 'What can I do to get the job done?' And she never failed to deliver."

Mrs. Drews, 54, the former vice president of marketing at Lipman Hearne, died Monday, Feb. 15, in the Rainbow Hospice Ark facility in Park Ridge, after a more than six-month battle with pancreatic cancer.

"What I'll remember is how Beth faced her cancer — with openness and honesty," said her husband. "She drew strength from family and friends and invited them to share in her journey."

Born in Berkeley, Calif., Mrs. Drews grew up in St. Louis. She graduated in 1977 from Indiana University after majoring in journalism and began

her newspaper career at the Memphis Commercial Appeal, drawing one particularly tough assignment — a Ku Klux Klan rally — her husband said.

"She was this young, daring reporter driving around the Deep South in a red VW bug," said her husband, with a soft laugh. "She wasn't afraid to look someone in the Ku Klux Klan straight in the eye."

In 1980, Mrs. Drews joined the Arkansas Gazette in Little Rock, where she covered state politics and interviewed then-Gov. Bill Clinton and his wife, Hillary. She left the Gazette in 1983 and moved to Austin, Texas, where she received an MBA in marketing from the University of Texas in 1985.

That same year, Mrs. Drews joined the marketing staff at the Minute Maid Co., a division of Coca-Cola, in Houston. It was there she met her future husband, and the two moved to northern California in 1987. Soon after she began working for Golden Grain, a subsidiary of Quaker Oats.

In 1992, Mrs. Drews and her husband settled in Oak Park, where she devoted the next six years to raising their two children.

"Her kids were the center of her universe," said close friend and neighbor Wendy Greenhouse.

Other survivors include a son, Tom; a daughter, Ellen; her parents, James and Merle Fair; two brothers, Jim Fair and Richard Fair.

A memorial visitation will be held at 1 p.m., until the time of services 2 p.m., Saturday in First United Church of Oak Park, 848 Lake St., Oak Park.

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