



# Margaret Rigg Memorial Award

ST. PETERSBURG — Margaret "Peg" Rigg colored outside the lines her whole life, even as she created letter-perfect calligraphies. The 33-year Eckerd College art professor amassed friends all over the world despite not being a social gadfly. Her art, politics and spirituality wove together like brightly colored thread. The point of her art, she wrote in 1972, is "to communicate even the hidden humor of life, beneath the pain of our struggling lives."

Ms. Rigg, a Fulbright scholar who co-founded Eckerd's visual art program and mentored hundreds of artists, died July 16 of pneumonia. She was 82. Ms. Rigg specialized in calligraphy, painting, mixed media, print making and sculpture, resulting in more than 60 one-woman shows on four continents. Her calligraphy was featured in CBS specials in 1968 and 1971. Ms. Rigg told students they could do it their way.

"Peg's independence, persistence and almost doggedness sometimes was a big help for students to see that you don't have to fit into a role so perfectly," said James Crane, a retired art program co-founder at Eckerd. "You're a unique human being, and it's your job to find out who and what you are and to go do it."

Her independence wasn't such a help to campus police, who often spotted Ms. Rigg's car parked on sidewalks. "She drove on the grass and parked wherever she wanted to her whole life," said Crane, 84.

She never joined the computer age, writing letters by hand to friends and illustrating them. "To receive a letter of encouragement or advice from Peg was also to receive a work of art in the mail," said Arthur Skinner, a former student of Ms. Rigg's and current art professor at Eckerd. "All of Peg's letters were keepers to treasure, even simple greetings or thank you notes."

Born in Pittsburgh in 1928, Ms. Rigg studied at Carnegie Mellon University and graduated from Florida State University. She also studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Presbyterian School of Christian Education, where she received her master's degree. Along the way, she studied at the Highlander Folk School (now the Highlander Research and Education Center) in Tennessee, considered a training ground for labor and civil rights activists, including Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In Nashville, she worked for 11 years as art director for *motive* magazine. She protested segregation with King and was taunted by her jailers.

The calligraphy for which she might have been known best often conveyed spiritual messages, underscoring her belief that all people and things are related. "She had a kind of Zen shamanic consciousness," said longtime friend Carolyn Johnston, 62, an American studies professor at Eckerd. "She made all kinds of philosophical and religious connections other people wouldn't."

In 1965, she followed art professors Robert Hodgell and Crane to Florida Presbyterian College. The school later changed its name to Eckerd College. Her span there included overcoming a tragedy. In 1974, Ms. Rigg was involved in a car crash outside London that resulted in the death of a childhood friend. Ms. Rigg suffered head injuries in the accident and had to relearn walking and drawing.

Though briefly engaged while in college, she never married, telling a friend that doing so would jeopardize her art. An early feminist, she helped found the Women's Resources Committee at Eckerd and endowed a scholarship for women artists. In 2008, the college awarded her its John Satterfield Outstanding Mentor Award.

Characteristically, Ms. Rigg left instructions for the message on her own grave marker. The stone will read: "Everything is everything." "We don't know what it means," Johnston said. "It's a sense of native American spirituality, of being in a web of connectedness."

RIGG, Margaret "Peg" age 82, of St. Petersburg, died at Bayfront Hospital on July 16, 2011, from pneumonia. She was born on Dec. 14, 1928, in Pittsburgh, PA to the late Carl Hazlett Rigg and Ruth Standish Massey Rigg

Here is one of Margaret "Peg" Rigg's works of art done in 1981. Other works of calligraphy were featured in CBS specials in 1968 and 1971.

