

OBITUARIES

JOAN RAPOPORT | 1942-2009

Taught pottery to celebrities

Bebe Neuwirth, Barry Bostwick among her students; had studios here and California

BY LARRY FINLEY

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Artist Joan Rapoport picked out the pot she wanted for her ashes. It was one of the thousands she had made during her long career as a potter and teacher.

"She was a strong woman," said her husband, Ron. "She had been in good health, great shape. She climbed Mt. Whitney for her 65th birthday. She had been up and down the Grand Canyon twice. She was diagnosed [with cancer] just three months and a week ago. It just got her."

Mrs. Rapoport, 66, died of pancreatic cancer Tuesday in her home in Van Nuys, Calif.

A professional potter for more than 35 years, she had studios in the Chicago area and California. She taught pottery at the Evanston Art Center and the Everywoman's Village in Van Nuys. Her husband, Ron Rapoport, is a retired Chicago Sun-Times sports columnist.

She was the former assistant treasurer and a member of the Artisans 21 Gallery and co-op in Hyde Park.

"She was a great potter," said Lynne Terr, the current treasurer. "She displayed her work here and took part in all of our activities. We take turns keeping the store open."

Her works included decorative vases and bowls as well as handmade dinnerware and tea sets, Terr said.

"She made me a beautiful juice set with a lovely pitcher," Terr said. "I use it every day. It was porcelain with a glaze

that is black and blue with grays. It's beautiful."

Born in Cleveland on Sept. 23, 1942, Mrs. Rapoport picked up her love for pottery while a student at Tufts University outside of Boston, her husband said. She took pottery classes at the Boston Museum School of Fine Arts. She got her master's degree in arts at Stanford University in California and studied at the College of Marin County, Calif.

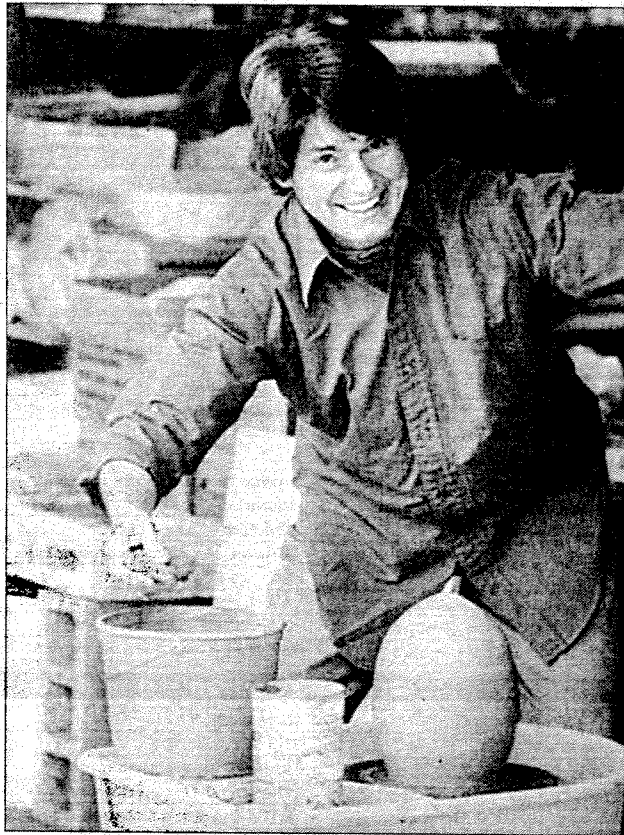
She worked in stoneware and porcelain and taught at studios, municipal and private art centers, city colleges and community groups.

She was always innovating, and one of her specialties was raku ware, bowls and cups produced for Japanese tea services using techniques dating to the 16th century. The process involves taking a blazing hot piece from a kiln and placing it in a closed metal container with various combustibles such as leaves and hay that smoke and change the object's glaze.

"She did that a lot," her husband said. "I could always tell where she had been because she came home smelling like a chimney."

In the 1990s, she taught more traditional pottery techniques at Everywoman's Village, a school for working woman and men.

"She taught some Hollywood people, such as Bebe Neuwirth, Barry Bostwick and Eric Pierpoint," her husband said. "So, we used to call her the 'Potter to the Stars.' It's an L.A. thing. You hang out a shingle, and you never know who shows up."



Joan Rapoport was a professional potter for decades. She was amused by the portrayal of Demi Moore doing pottery in "Ghost."

In 1990, she was teaching there when the number of her students doubled from one semester to the next, he said.

"I said for her to go back and ask the people if they had seen the movie 'Ghost,' which had just come out with an opening with Demi Moore throwing [shaping] pots," he said. "What Joan thought was funny was Demi Moore throwing pots and getting clay all over a \$300 shirt instead of a T-shirt like any re-

spectable potter would."

In an interview with the Los Angeles Times in 1995, she said pottery gave her a chance to express herself in three dimensions.

"I like pottery because it's a puzzle," she said. It also reminded her of her childhood and "making mud pies."

Her other survivors include two daughters, Rebecca and Julie Rapoport, and a granddaughter.

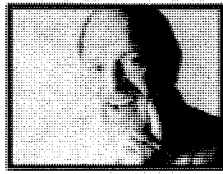
A memorial service will be held this fall in California.

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CLARENCE 'CURLY BEAR' WAGNER



QUICK HITS

WITH ELLIOTT HARRIS eharris@suntimes.

THURSDAY THOUGHTS

CITY, 'BURBS ALL BANDITS TERRITORY

The Chicago Bandits finally are putting some Chicago into their softball. The Elgin-based defending National Pro Fastpitch League champions will play their first game within the city limits at 7 p.m. Tuesday against the USSSA All-Star team at Thillens Stadium. Tickets are \$10. More information is available at chicagobandits.com. On Monday, the Bandits have a suburban "Battle of the Sexes" softball contest against the Schaumburg Flyers, a Northern League baseball team, at Alexian Field in Schaumburg. Tickets for the 7:05 p.m. game are available at the stadium ticket office or flyersbaseball.com. "I think this is a great opportunity to find out who is really the best in a battle of the sexes," Bandits owner/CEO Bill Sokollis said. "I'm looking forward to leaving Alexian Field with another victory for the Bandits and for women softball players all over the world."

◆ Condolences to the family of **Joan Rapoport**, who died Tuesday night at age 66 from recently diagnosed pancreatic cancer. She was a smart, vibrant, creative, artistic person of diverse interests. A true delight to be around. She was the wife of former Sun-Times sports columnist **Ron Rapoport**. The world will be a lesser place without her. Words cannot adequately do her or the loss of her justice.

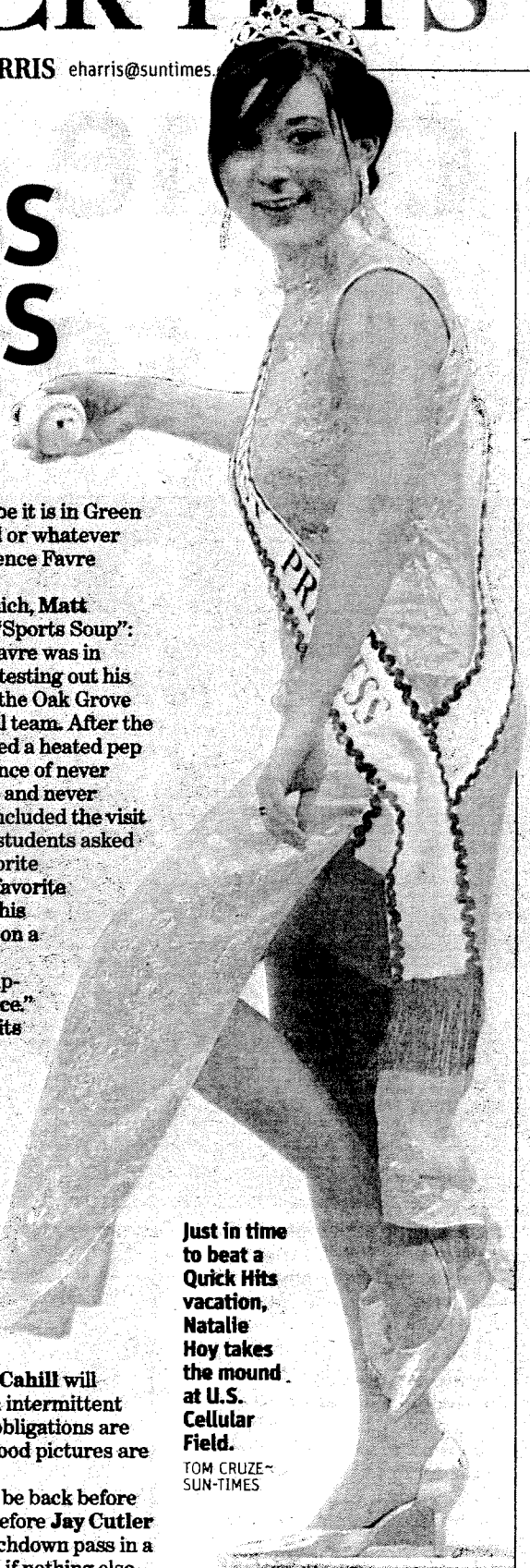
◆ Of matters less than life and death, the tension is mounting for **Brett Favre's** announcement about whether he will quarterback the Minnesota Vikings this season and make them automatic NFC North champions and Super Bowl

winners. Well, maybe it is in Green Bay and Vikingland or whatever self-absorbed existence Favre seems to relish.

◆ Speaking of which, **Matt Iseman** of Versus' "Sports Soup": "[Recently] Brett Favre was in Hattiesburg, Miss., testing out his throwing arm with the Oak Grove High School football team. After the workout, he delivered a heated pep talk on the importance of never giving up, giving up and never giving up. Favre concluded the visit with a Q&A where students asked Favre about his favorite breakfast food, his favorite summer shoes and his favorite place to sit on a cattle ranch. His answers: waffles, flip-flops and on the fence."

◆ While Quick Hits takes a couple of weeks of well-deserved (well, they're deserved based on the Guild contract) vacation, there is some consolation for Web-browsing types looking for photo galleries. Sun-Times sports Internet guru **Dan Cahill** will provide them on an intermittent basis (when other obligations are less pressing and good pictures are more present).

◆ Quick Hits will be back before you know it. Well, before **Jay Cutler** throws his first touchdown pass in a game for the Bears, if nothing else.



Just in time to beat a Quick Hits vacation, **Natalie Hoy** takes the mound at U.S. Cellular Field.

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