



Betty Jean Gipson

June 4, 1927 - March 23, 2020

Betty Jean (Padgett) Gipson, 92, of Springfield, MO (formerly of Bolivar), passed away peacefully on Monday, March 23, 2020. Born June 4, 1927, she was the fourth of five children born to Thomas Emery and Alta O. Padgett of Mountain View, MO.

Betty was a graduate of Mountain View High School, Southwest Baptist College (A.A.), Oklahoma Baptist University (B.A.), Southwest Missouri State University (M.A.) and Missouri University (Ph.D.) A lifelong teacher, she spent her early years teaching English in public schools in Mountain View and Hartville. She and her family moved to Bolivar in 1966, where she worked in public relations at then-Southwest Baptist College, before becoming an English professor for many years and retiring from Southwest Baptist University in 1991. Driven by her boundless energy and enthusiasm as a tour guide, Betty frequently pushed her student groups to the point of exhaustion (and some would claim despair), as she led them on treks around Europe. Many of her students recall these trips with Betty among the highlights of their lives. In 1997 she received SBU's prestigious Life Service Award.

She was a member of First Baptist Church in Bolivar, where she enjoyed singing in the church choir. Among many community activities, she participated in Delta Kappa Gamma; wrote feature stories for the Bolivar Herald-Free Press; directed musicals for the Bolivar Community

Theatre; played tennis in the Bolivar Tennis Association; served at the Salvation Army Food Pantry, PCCSM clothing bank, and Share Your Christmas; volunteered at Community Blood Center of the Ozarks blood drives; and presented programs for Polk County Library's Friends of the Library. Whether at a restaurant in Bolivar or at a cafe in Paris, Betty brought both her love of food and her delightful sense of humor to the table, regaling her friends and family with stories, often self-deprecating, always hilarious. In 1994-95 she and her lifelong friend and traveling companion Rose Mary Owens spent a year teaching at Northwest Normal University in Lanzhou, China.

Betty was preceded in death by her parents; a daughter, Sherida Ruth Burton; and three

sisters, Opal Martin, Ola Williams, and Willette Heuer.

She is survived by a daughter Linda Roller and husband Doug of Springfield; a son David Gipson and wife Julie of Rogersville; a brother Tom Padgett and wife Shirley of Springfield; eleven grandchildren, Rachele (Butler) Laux and husband Paul of Arlington, TX, Geoffrey Welch of Springfield, Emily Roller and wife Frances Pollock of New Haven, CT, William Bryson Roller of New York City, Jenna Roller of Springfield, Laney Gipson of Stuttgart, Germany, Brock Gipson of Springfield, Annie Gipson, Allie Gipson, Kadie Gipson and Kanon Gipson of Rogersville; four great-grandchildren, Michael and Camden Laux of Arlington, TX, and Shade and Drake Welch of Springfield; and a host of nieces, nephews and friends.

After suffering a stroke in 2017, Betty moved to The Maples Health and Rehabilitation in Springfield, where she enjoyed the daily company of fellow residents Tom and Shirley, as well as the loving and professional care from aides, nurses, therapists and staff who work there. The family will be forever grateful for the love and care she received.

A Celebration of Life will be announced at a later date due to COVID-19. Memorial contributions may be made to the Betty Gipson Outstanding Writer Scholarship at Southwest Baptist University or a charity of your choice.

Comments



“ Dr. Gipson was one of my favorite professors at SBU as well as my academic advisor, and I learned a lot from her, as well as from her brother, Dr. Padgett, and her daughter Linda Roller, who taught German. She allowed me to make my own share of mistakes in some of the choices I made while making sure she steered me in a solid academic direction. The memories I have of our conversations through the years are a big part of what's guiding me now as I am making many transitions in life at the moment.

She believed in the experience. The very first year I was in her classes, she was sharing all kinds of personal experiences with us and that was something I'd never experienced in a class before. She talked about serving on jury duty and working on her doctorate thesis, and we were all happy when she became "Dr. Gipson". Class time was more of an experience than just a lecture or discussion time, and she believed in experiencing life to the fullest. And she would always say, "The more you learn, the less you know or realize you actually know." And she had a way of getting us to laugh about our own experiences and to put them in a fresh perspective. And when I told her I was taking a trip with my family (summer of 1987), she told me, "Take in the experience and don't get caught up in the tourist traps." I followed her advice and now have some of the best memories of being with my family. To this day, I focus on the experience when I travel anywhere, take on a new endeavor, or even try a new restaurant in the area.

Her enthusiasm was contagious, and sometimes when she was behind the lectern, her energy would spill over into some kind of a little dance. But of course, we didn't dare call it a "dance" at SBU. Sometimes, just seeing that enthusiasm would pull me right back into whatever I was supposed to learn that day, as I was often overwhelmed by college life in general at the time.

Dr. Gipson was a true friend to her students and colleagues, and through the seas of distraction, she was a lighthouse. To me, she was one of the best professors, as well as a friend and "extended family" through the years.

Remembering her family in thoughts and prayers--may memories of her be a constant source of comfort, warmth, and peace for you.





“ Betty Gipson changed my life. Hers was the first progressive Christian voice I ever heard. She provided a mountain of moral support to me during some of the most trying times of my younger life, and most of all, her wisdom and loving kindness has continued to inspire and to guide me for all of life since. When I read a good book, I think of her. When I travel hither and yon, whether I am packing a bag or hurling myself from one incredible site to the next, Betty is with me. (Though my traveling companions have been known to complain, I do trips the way Betty did.) And when I am in a foreign land, I always watch where I step! The Creator God has only given Earth a handful of Bettys. I am eternally grateful for having had the great honor to call this wonderful Betty my friend. Though I have not seen her for years, I will miss her greatly.



Gary Brown - April 23, 2020 at 07:21 PM



“ I always remember your mom with a smile. She had boundless energy and her enthusiasm for life spilled over into every aspect of her life. She was a cherished and admired friend of my mom's (Joyce Sells). She was a wonderful Creative Writing teacher, who was overly generous in grading my papers!! I will be forever grateful that she and her brother Dr. Tom Padgett actively demonstrated how to engage a college classroom by showing their excitement for their subject matter and love of students. They made me want to learn, and that continues to be a lifelong pursuit.

Janice (Sells) Glover

Janice Glover - April 02, 2020 at 07:49 PM



“ Dear Mrs. Gipson was our teacher and later our friend Betty. What wonderful memories. Our senior trip was a riot. We shared our cabin with her because she was our friend not because we needed the chaperon with us! We love you Betty.

Katherine Eschrich - March 27, 2020 at 05:54 PM



“ It was a blessing to have known Betty. Her sweet smile and encouraging kindness were always inspirational. We are glad our path crossed with her life. Judy & Gordon Dutile

Judy & Gordon Dutile - March 25, 2020 at 12:22 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Betty Jean Gipson.



March 24, 2020 at 05:36 PM



“ Dear Gipson Family and Rosemary,
I am saddened to hear of Betty's passing. I was privileged to meet and get acquainted with her She was a loving, caring Christian friend and will be missed by many. Rosemary was her faithful friend and may God Bless you at this difficult time.
In Christian Love
Phyllis Johnson



Phyllis Johnson - March 24, 2020 at 10:35 AM



“ So sorry to hear to of Dr. Gipson's passing. She was an outstanding English Professor and equally outstanding Christian. My favorite Professor in college. I'm forever in debt to her, her instructions and boundless encouragement.

Paul - March 26, 2020 at 12:49 PM



“ Betty and Rosemary were truly the queens of lobs

Blake Little - April 03, 2020 at 04:02 PM



“ Betty Gipson was my English professor in the 70s, and I had her for several classes since my major was English. She was an excellent professor and brought a lot of humor and joy to our classes. I have many fond memories of her. God bless you.

Rita Huddleston Jackson - March 24, 2020 at 10:24 AM