



Tom Eugene Padgett

October 16, 1929 - July 16, 2023

Thomas Eugene Padgett, 93, of Springfield, MO (formerly of Bolivar), peacefully passed away Sunday, July 16, 2023. He was the youngest of five children and the only boy born October 16, 1929 to Thomas E. and Alta O. Padgett of Mountain View, Missouri. Tom was a graduate of Mountain View High School, Southwest Baptist College (A.A.), Oklahoma Baptist University (B.A.), Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.R.E), University of Texas (M.A), and University of Missouri (Ph.D.).

At SWBC he met Shirley Margaret Morris from Blue Springs and they married in 1952. While completing graduate degrees he worked in youth and music ministries in Oklahoma and Texas Southern Baptist Churches and was the Assistant Director at the Texas Baptist Children's Home in Round Rock. In 1960 he moved his family back to MO where he taught English and directed plays at Mountain View High School.

In 1963 after a move to Bolivar Tom began a thirty-year teaching career at SWBC/SBU. He was chair of the English department and specialized in American Literature. He energetically led numerous student trips to England, Europe, and New York City. He also taught English in China and Russia. He was a member of the First Baptist Church and he participated in Bolivar Community Theatre and Friends of the Library. He was affectionately known in his neighborhood as "the man who walks and reads a book at the same time." Tom had a life-long love of poetry. He was a published poet and founding member of the Missouri State Poetry Society and a local Second Tuesday

Poets group. He was an officer in the National Federation of State Poetry Societies and Missouri Poets and Friends. He along with SWBC roommate, Gene Barnett, established the Barnett-Padgett Literary Series at SBU.

Tom was known for his animated teaching, his wit and sense of humor, and his joke and storytelling ability. He had many hobbies including traveling, books, movies, crossword puzzles, card and board games, music, Broadway plays and musicals, tennis, owls, and the St. Louis Cardinals.

Tom was preceded in death by his parents, his wife of seventy years, Shirley, and four sisters Opal Martin, Ola Williams, Willette Heuer, and Betty Gipson. He is survived by his daughters Julie Desroches (Rich), Becky House, Tamara Samek (Mike), twelve grandchildren, eleven great grandchildren, nieces and nephews, many friends, and former students.

Memorial donations may be made to the Polk County Library Building Fund or Seasons Hospice of Springfield. There will be a joint celebration of life held August 12, 2023 at the First Baptist Church Fellowship hall at 3:00 PM Hall for Tom and his sister Betty Gipson who passed away March 23, 2020.

Tribute Wall



“ *Tom Eugene Padgett*

October 05, 2023 at 05:18 AM



“ *I was fortunate to have both Betty Gipson and Tom Padgett as high school English teachers at Mountain View. Betty taught my Freshman class and Tom taught the Senior class. Both were outstanding teachers and had a smile on their faces and great energy. Tom started the Drama Club my Senior year and that was a great addition for the school. I received the Outstanding Actor award for my portrayal of the village idiot in a play he wrote. Some said I was a natural. I will always have fond memories of both of them.*
Howard Henry

Howard Henry - August 12, 2023 at 01:54 PM



“ *I knew Poet Tom Padgett via Lucidity Retreat in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. He was a leader in the retreat; I was a student and writer of poetry. Tom Padgett taught more than poetry; he taught kindness, compassion, affirmation, and poetry. He carried goodness and light as he walked his path. I'm grateful my path crossed his.*
Condolences to his family and friends.

Pat Durmon - July 21, 2023 at 05:23 PM



“ *Tom was a dear friend and such an encourager for me. He epitomized a teacher who taught his discipline from a biblical worldview. I consider knowing him as one of the great blessings of my life.*
Gordon Dutile

Gordon Dutile - July 21, 2023 at 11:02 AM

KS

“ Tamara, we are praying for peace during your time of loss.

Ken & Stacie Spurgeon

KENNETH W SPURGEON - July 21, 2023 at 08:06 AM

TD

“ When I arrived at SBU in the fall of 1985, many different faculty members had offices in the first floor of Taylor Hall...Math, Education, Computer Science, and yes, English were all together. Tom's office was to my right and Joe Brown's office was across the hall. Those two made my first few years memorable--in particular, I took many notes on how Tom treated students: He was firm and clear, but his love for literature and his students always came through. He was a giant at SBU in his time.

Tim DeClue - July 20, 2023 at 10:26 AM

SS

“ I remember one winter when there was an ice storm and the students at SBU had no heat in the dorms and were sent out to stay with faculty members and residents of the community. I had the privilege of being at the Padgetts and experiencing the fun they were as a family. Is one of the greatest winter memories at SBU next to when they canceled finals for another ice storm! I feel sorry for any student that never had Dr Padgett. Dr Padgett gave his best which brought out the best in you. Made learning fun in class, travel and church. He was one of the most influential men in my life! Love the Padgett family and hurt for their loss and ours.

Stan Sullinger - July 19, 2023 at 05:49 PM

DR

“ I was blessed to have had SBU’s fantastic brother sister duo for my years at Southwest Baptist College. They both taught with a passion you rarely find! Their love of their subject matter created the perfect learning environment. It was one of fun, laughter, and a desire to do your best because they gave their best!

Debbie Mix Russell - July 19, 2023 at 04:23 PM

BG

“ Dr. Tom Padgett was my favorite professor at SBU! I was a math major, but minored in English just because I loved his classes. His passion for literature inspired me. When he would talk about a book in class, I would have to find it and read it even if it wasn't required. I remember traveling to an Alpha Chi conference in San Antonio with Dr. Padgett and Dr. Penticuff. We played password in the van during the long drive and had a great time. As a teacher I have always tried to spend the time with each student and have half the passion of Dr. Padgett. In my first years of teaching at SBU it was a great honor to have Tom as a colleague! I am so fortunate to have been one of his students and to have him as a friend and fellow teacher.

Bob Glasgow

Bob Glasgow - July 19, 2023 at 03:27 PM

DL

“ Dr. Padgett literally taught me to write, as I had no experience in high school. I will never forget the first paper I wrote in his college class—returned to me covered in red marks. Had many more after that. I ended up majoring in English at MU—could not have happened without everything he taught me. Also memorable was a January term trip to England, Scotland and Paris. Betty Gipson went on that trip as well. Tom and Betty were hilarious together. Enjoyable and educational. Will never forget Tom or Betty. Special people who made a positive influence on my life. Grateful for them!

Dana Lynch - July 19, 2023 at 11:49 AM

SH

“ I certainly enjoyed knowing Dr. Padgett. I went on his Grand Tour of Europe for Theatre credit in January of '75. It was a great time and a great time to be at SWBC! Our condolences to the family. Spencer Hutson

Spencer Hutson - July 19, 2023 at 11:04 AM

S1

“ Dr. Tom Padgett was the very best college professor I had. He made his lectures come alive and never expected more of his students in class preparation than he gave. Among my more recent memories of Tom was him daily walking our neighborhood always with a book in his hand. He truly had a passion for reading and passed that along to his students. Sincere condolences to his beautiful family. We miss you, beloved teacher. You taught many of us well. ❤️

Sandy McDonald Jones, SBU Class of 1969 - July 16, 2023 at 03:51 PM

JB

Dr. Padgett was a jewel of a teacher. I believe whatever he did he gave it 100 percent. No matter it was Lit class or Sunday School. My condolences to his family. Janell Barger SBU class of 1979.

Janell Barger - July 19, 2023 at 12:24 PM

SS

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Stan Sullinger - July 19, 2023 at 05:23 PM

PL

It was not mentioned in the obit, but Dr. Padgett spent a week during spring for many years as lecturer at the Lucidity Poetry Retreat begun by Ted Badger and held in Eureka Springs Arkansas. I still have notes and books from those he presented. My condolences. He was a great lecturer and a great man.

Patricia A Laster - July 19, 2023 at 06:57 PM

JR

Tom tried to rehabilitate me to be a normal and more successful poet and was unsuccessful due to my unwillingness to change!

joel randall - July 20, 2023 at 09:22 AM

JG

I did my first two years of college at the University of Oregon, where I had the most wonderful English instructors, and I was focused on English lit. Upon transfer to SWBC I was in Dr. Padgett's American Lit class--he taught me to love it equally. A wonderful, wonderful, funny, brilliant, and kind teacher. However, in my home as I grew up he was known as "Tommy," because both of my parents were in the high school graduating class with him in Mountain View. My mother dated him and my father was a close friend of his. Both of them cherished his friendship. My father also wrote poetry (quite good poetry) and he so enjoyed Dr. Padgett's books--as did I, because the were deeply steeped in Mountain View (which I had grown up visiting due to a large extended family there). My father died in 2021 and toward the end of his life he wondered about "Tommy," how he was, and what he was doing. Good-bye, Dr. Padgett--they loved you, "Tommy."

Janis Walker Gilmore - July 21, 2023 at 03:08 AM

SE

His passion in teaching was so inspiring to me as a student at SBU in the seventies. I loved his classes and like so many others, I kept taking literature because he brought it to life. He inspired me to think and write with open mind and passion. Condolences to the family.

Sandy Ellis. September 29, 2024

Sandy Ellis - September 29, 2024 at 09:26 PM