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In Memory of Bettie Sue Nugent

JULY 31ST 2022 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Bettie Sue Nugent, affectionately known as “Ms. Bettie” by many in the Dexter area, passed unexpectedly into the arms of her Lord and Savior on July 27, 2022, at the family home located on Moore Street where she had resided since 1971.

Born August 17, 1940, in Jonesboro, Arkansas to A.B. “Beryl” and Necie Marlar Clayton, Bettie spent most of her childhood in Jonesboro and graduated from Jonesboro Arkansas High School in 1958 in the top ten of her class. Before graduation, she met A.J. Nugent and was smitten. As life and love are never simple, her parents forbid her to see him for “he is far too old for you.” Bettie, with a stubborn streak and a mind of her own, disobeyed her parents and would sneak out to see A.J.

Following graduation, Bettie attended Arkansas State University where she was a member of Beta Sigma Phi and played the flute in the marching band. Although Bettie had multiple other suitors, the love story continued against her parents’ wishes. Prior to completing her second year at ASU, Bettie and A.J. were married on February 18, 1961, all the while her father complaining about the cost of a \$200 wedding dress being ridiculous. The newlyweds were a striking couple.

There were many adventures over the coming years as Bettie worked for Bell Telephone as a connecting operator and Dr. Jibben’s office. Bettie had not learned to drive and A.J. would drive her to work each day. Eventually, those car rides would turn into Bettie complaining that she couldn’t go anywhere – not even the grocery store – without him. She demanded A.J. teach her to drive. Getting her driver’s license was one of Bettie’s

proudest accomplishments.

Bettie loved to dance! She and A.J. would get dressed up and drag their kids to square-dancing every weekend. Her kids do not remember those evenings fondly. Bettie even talked A.J. into Disco dancing lessons once – they didn't stick!

Bettie was an amazing cook, a gift which was passed down from her mother. She fed everybody within ten feet of her. A continual source of aggravation for Bettie was that she was forced to cook for A.J.'s family the weekend of their wedding and never could get those biscuits just right. She sold many of her cakes and pies for special occasions. The family joke is that her cooking is why Jay got married – his mother bribed his future wife with an apple crumb cake and kept her around with a yearly strawberry pie on her birthday. Bettie was a collector of cookbooks and tried thousands of recipes over the years.

Bettie was also a teacher at the Small Wonders daycare before becoming the cook in addition to teaching for the Small Wonders daycare at the Baptist Church for many years. Hordes of children were loved and fed by "Ms. Bettie" during her time there and prior to that at her own in-home daycare.

Bettie had a love for plants and flowers which she inherited from her father. She would grow her own herbs and spices for her cooking. Three separate times she gave Crystal a start of chives and all three times Crystal couldn't keep them alive. Besides caring for her family, nothing put a smile on her face like a blooming flower that she could love and care for.

Bettie had an amazing smile and an infectious laugh. Let's not forget opinionated...anybody want to talk politics? She was happiest when surrounded by her family and friends. Her dry sense of humor made frequent appearances. Everyone who knew her could probably tell you something witty that had come out of her mouth when least expected.

Bettie was a member of the Red Hats Society and the Altrusa Club for many years. In addition, she and A.J. were active in the church and taught the Senior Youth group together for a time. Health concerns eventually no longer allowed Bettie to attend services in person, but her faith never faltered. No doubt when she closed her eyes on earth and opened her eyes in paradise, the face of the Savior was the first thing she saw.

Left behind to cherish her memory are her loving husband of 61+ years A.J., son Jay (Crystal), and daughter, Lesley (Paul Schock). Grandma Bettie loved her grandchildren with all her heart and those children will always know what a wonderful woman she was:

Lilly, Haylee, Caleb, and Clay as well as grand-dogs Benji and Francesca. She will be missed greatly by the family cats that she had been adamant they would not keep before they purred their way right into her heart: Ginny, Harry, Luna, and Smudge. Bettie taught us all how to live well and love much. Our lives will never be the same.

Visitation will be held at the First United Methodist Church in Dexter on Monday, August 1, 2022, from 11:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m.

Funeral services will then be conducted at 1:00 p.m. with Rev. Larry Lawman officiating.

Interment will follow in the Missouri State Veterans Cemetery in Bloomfield, Missouri. Pallbearers will be Jay Nugent, Paul Schock, Scott Kruse, Larry White, Alan Hedrick, and Brian Becker. Honorary Pallbearers are Crystal Nugent, Kathy White, Adrienne White, Jim and Jamie Cook, Marilyn Nugent, Pat Ockel, Debbie Ockel, Judy and Bill Perkins, and Phyllis Hudson.

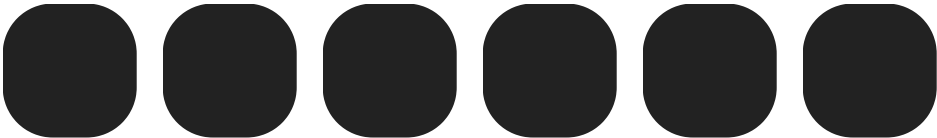
Memorial may be made to St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital; Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation; Humane Society of Southeast Missouri; Stoddard County Children’s Home; Arkansas State University; Siteman Cancer Center; or Vanderbilt University’s Department of Otolaryngology.

Mathis Funeral Home in Dexter is assisting with arrangements.

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