



Betty Ann Watson

June 30, 1942 - February 19, 2017

Only my immediate family can know how they were my life, and how deeply I treasured them:

Zearl Watson, my husband of 47 years;
my son David and his wife April of Powell, TN, with their children Mackenzie and Josiah;
my son Zac and his wife Kim, of Rochester Hills, MI.

I am thankful for my wonderful parents who modeled Christianity and the love of positive moral values in my life. I was blessed with the most wonderful brothers and sister, with their wives and husband, along with ten nieces and nephews:

Ed and Joan Work of Centreville, VA;
Dale and Debbie Work of Cookeville, TN, with son Damon and daughter Lee;
Nancy and Mike Gray of North Richland Hills, TX, with daughters Heather, Kellee and Wendy, and sons Austin and Jordan;
Rick and Donna Work of North Richland Hills, TX, with daughters Rachel, Chelsea and Abby.

At this time I want to thank God for allowing me to live in heaven on earth, Searcy, Arkansas, always surrounded by friends, family, and students. I was

blessed to be educated at Trenton High School in suburban Detroit; that school system was an outstanding one. I later attended North Central Christian College (today Rochester College) where I was in the chorus, as well as in a trio and a choral octet. I was blessed with perfect pitch and a love for music. The summer after my freshman year the octet traveled across the country, recruiting students. Beautiful memories.

I spent my final two undergraduate years at Harding based on a recommendation from one of my mentors – Claudette Alexander, the wife of our choral director in Michigan. This was a momentous decision, which resulted not only in completing my undergraduate degree, but also paved the way for my 47 years of teaching in the Harding University Department of Education. It was at Harding that I met my wonderful husband Zearl. Our two delightful sons were born in Searcy and grew up on the Harding campus.

Shortly after moving to Searcy I finished my master's degree at Michigan State University. My Harding experience prepared me for my final foray into higher education, an Ed.D. from Memphis State University. This led to my serving as the Director of the Early Childhood Education program for over fifteen years, during which time I had one of the highlights of my career, teaching a semester in Italy. Another highlight was serving for more than 30 years as a member of the Arkansas Diamond Reading Committee.

Two great honors were being named an Outstanding Alumna by both Rochester College and Harding. However, my most treasured accolade was being named a winner of the Outstanding Teacher Award at Harding three times – retiring the award as a Distinguished Professor. I would like to be remembered as a teacher who loved all her students and loved showing them how to help children to enjoy reading. I am both proud and humbled to have directly, or indirectly through my Harding students, taught many thousands of

children to read.

My life was full of blessings too numerous to mention – especially my family, my church family, my home Bible study group, and my career at Harding, and the opportunity to visit many countries. As my life on earth ends and yours continues, I pray that you all will enjoy living for Christ, as I did.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

FEB **25**. 1:00 PM (CT)

College Church of Christ
Searcy, AR 72143

Tribute Wall



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Betty Ann Watson.*



February 24, 2017 at 01:45 PM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Betty Ann Watson.*



February 24, 2017 at 11:04 AM



“ *As a member of the Supper Club group Zearl and Betty are involved in I learned to admire and love both of them. We have a kinship because of our individual faith and it is a tie that binds us together. Because of this bond we draw strength and wisdom from each other. It is very difficult to acknowledge that I will not be able to visit with Betty in person again but I carry her smile and kindness in my heart. Each one of us who love Betty need to make a promise that because of her we will do our best to love everyone and always be kind to others, sharing our faith with them.*

Wanda Spears

Wanda Spears - February 23, 2017 at 09:10 PM

MS

“ Truly my favorite teacher, friend at Harding. She spent many hours trying to keep me focused and to start taking my studies serious. She was as pure as driven snow which only added to her beauty and charm. I know she will be missed by many, and never forgotten by those of who knew her. Thank you for your patience and guidance Betty.

Mike Shue - February 22, 2017 at 09:05 AM

CS

“ Betty was such a wonderful Christian lady! You knew she loved the Lord first, then family, then friends! I always looked at her with admiration! She always had a smile on her face words of wisdom and encouragement to uplift all she came in contact with! I know she will be deeply missed but also know that her love for the Lord and others will always be in our hearts when thoughts of her pass thru our minds! We love you Betty and know you r happy and free of pain!

charlene sivia - February 21, 2017 at 10:02 PM

CB

“ Dr. Watson has passed on her love of children's literature to so many, including myself. I can still hear her voice as she shared so many of her favorites in our children's lit class. I am so grateful that I knew this lovely lady.

Cortney Bowman - February 21, 2017 at 09:48 PM

CG

“ Dr. Watson's love of children's literature was evident from the first day of class. When I first visited her office & saw shelves overflowing with picture books lining the walls, I thought of expanding my collection and of the children who would one day be my students. Each semester she invited students to her home and made us feel welcome through her gift of hospitality. She opened our class on poetry with "Wouldn't you like to have lasagne, any old time the mood was on ya?" I don't think I've made a lasagne in the past 15 years without thinking about that poem and the lovely lady who taught it to me.

Candice Bush Garner - February 21, 2017 at 09:32 PM

LB

“ I had Betty for Children's Literature in 1972 -- what a wonderful professor and mentor. In fact, the last few years of my teaching career I was able to teach Children's Literature at ASU Jonesboro. My goal was to half the professor she had been to me. She was the best!

Lina Leatherwood Burk - February 21, 2017 at 08:29 PM

SG

“ I remember Mrs. Watson as my teacher at Harding in about 1978. I believe she was pregnant at the time. She was so sweet and gentle spirited; always had a kind smile on her face. I was young and she was young and I thought she was so pretty!!!!

shelah gunter - February 21, 2017 at 05:15 PM

RF

“ A blessing to all she taught! With her attention to the individual and her encouragement to all of us, she modeled what she taught. And what she taught was that teaching the children that came into our classrooms was a high calling, worth our best efforts, and a nonstop opportunity to share's God's love to the uniquely special children He created.

Robyn Fincher - February 21, 2017 at 05:11 PM

LM

“ Our prayers go out to the family. What a wonderful lady. She has spread so much joy to all.

Ed and Linda Mehl

linda mehl - February 21, 2017 at 04:20 PM

DD

“ Dr Betty Watson leaves a giant hole behind where her bright smile & warm hugs once were. She loved deeply and encouraged constantly. I probably wouldn't have finished my degree if it wasn't for her taking an interest in me. I know she touched hundreds of lives.

Donna Davis - February 21, 2017 at 03:16 PM

DA

“ Such a sweet lady! Always a joy to see her. She will be missed. Love and prayers to the family!

Debbie Anderson - February 21, 2017 at 01:45 PM

FD

“ Betty, was such a wonderful person and a true friend. My husband and I were in the same Wednesday night Bible Study Group with her and Zearl for many years. We all grew so close to each other in those years. We were family.

Betty stood by me when my husband became sick with cancer. She came and sat with me in the hospital and encouraged me. When the widows group from the College Church started meeting once a month she made a dessert for us each time. When she became ill she apologized to me that she could not longer do the desserts. We all loved her for her sweetness and kindness.

Betty loved her family very much. Her eyes would light up when she talked about her grandchildren. She loved her students and wanted them to be successful in life. I think her students felt that love and knew that she was sincere. While working in the Harding Bookstore many years I would hear her name mentioned as being a favorite teacher by some of the students.

We will miss her, but know that we will see her again someday in heaven when we will all be with Jesus and our loved ones. Prayers and blessings on the family.

Fran Dugger - February 21, 2017 at 01:40 PM

MC

“ Other than my daddy, Jack Wood Sears, Betty Watson was by far my favorite teacher.

One day in class, she read a sweet book. It brought tears to my eyes. She understood, because she, too was a mother.

Martha Sears Collins - February 21, 2017 at 01:30 PM

MD

“ My favorite teacher at Harding. Dr. Work wasn't even married when I had her. She was a fantastic teacher....loved her dearly! May God bless her family! Marty Childers Davis Fairview, Texas

Marty Childers Davis - February 21, 2017 at 01:26 PM

MT

“ I'm very thankful for the impact that Dr. Watson had on my love and teaching of reading. She is going to be missed, and we realize that her transition to Paradise is going to make that place even brighter than it already is. Please know that the family is in our thoughts and prayers. In Him, Monte and Beth Tatom



Monte Tatom - February 21, 2017 at 01:24 PM

KF

“ I had language arts and children's literature under Betty. She a professor first and a friend later in life. She was a wonderful Christian and will be missed greatly. Prayers for Zearl and the rest of her family. Much love to you all. Kay Felker

Kay Patton Felker - February 21, 2017 at 01:00 PM

KB

“ *This sweet lady taught me language arts in 1972-74 at Harding. How I loved her and still remember many things she said about teaching elementary school! Really, I remember how she GUIDED and ENCOURAGED us in project learning and teaching. We made language arts themed adventure in groups and presented them to each other. Mine was on astronomy. We formed notebooks of books and poems to use with children. She even taught us to write on a chalkboard. So practical and hand-on she was. A nurturer. I felt loved and affirmed by her. I visited her in her office about 5 years ago at Harding. She still knew me by name when I walked in and even knew what books I would enjoy reading! I have thought of her so many times through the years, just like a family member. She also taught and then employed my niece as a helper in her office around 10 years ago.*

Kay Banta 1970-1974 and more

Kay Banta - February 21, 2017 at 11:01 AM

CB

“ *Carolyn Bass lit a candle in memory of Betty Ann Watson*



Carolyn Bass - February 21, 2017 at 10:06 AM

FP

“ I will miss the hugs, smiles and hellos I use to get from you. Your smile could light up the room. You were always kind and soft spoken and always welcoming. I loved your kids and I loved watching you and Mr. Watson from afar. I admire the way you fought the demon of cancer and the way you lived with faith for God and dignity in all you did. You blessed so many people with your life but you have gained what you lived for daily-Heaven. Enjoy your new, healthy body and your reunion with Christ. We will miss you here but you will never be forgotten. Prayers for your family, each and every one. Love you Ms. Betty.


Farah Mackey Price

Farah Price - February 21, 2017 at 08:28 AM

SH

“ How can one ever forget her infectious personality? Her love for teaching was evident to all who were privileged to be taught by her. She shared her love for literature in such a way that you were caught up in the stream of affection that flowed through her joy of teaching. We will all miss her smile and always remember how she taught us to love teaching the children. Zearl and family we will remember you all as you adjust to life here on Earth now that Betty has gone on to her home in Heaven.

Suzan Hill - February 21, 2017 at 05:33 AM

 Donny
Lee

“ Betty was a joy to work with as a colleague. She offered a contagious smile emanating from an overflowing heart of love and passion for teaching. Her legacy literally lives on in thousands of classrooms around the world and no doubt countless readers enjoy story after story because of Dr. Watson's influence. We will all remember her in different ways and I am pleased we will be reminded of her daily as we honor her in the renaming of the Education Resource Center in her name to honor her work and legacy at Harding University.

Donny Lee - February 20, 2017 at 10:00 PM

ZM

“ We are thinking of you, Zearl, David, Zac, and your families. We were blessed to have Betty as a friend, and we were also blessed to get to know Betty's parents. Blessings to all of you at this time!

Zac & Connie Muncy - February 20, 2017 at 09:51 PM

AC

“ I'm so sorry for your loss. I was honored to have been one of Dr. Watson's students at Harding. She taught me the love of teaching children and the love of reading. The world will not be the same place without her smile and wisdom. I'm thankful to have had her in my life. I'm so very sad about her leaving this earth, but I know she is in Heaven rejoicing with the angles!! Prayers!! 🙏🙏🙏🙏

April Chandler - February 20, 2017 at 09:28 PM

LL

“ *What beautiful words to reflect the beautiful life of Dr. Watson. I am so blessed to be a former student of Dr. Watson and I had the privilege of being her graduate assistant as well. What I will always remember about Dr. Watson is her love for God, her family, and for all of her students. She is a forever not only a career mentor in my life, but a spiritual mentor. Sending love from Oklahoma to the Watson family.*

Lauren Reese Lukeman

HU student 2005-2008

Lauren Reese Lukeman - February 20, 2017 at 09:17 PM

CK

“ *Precious Betty. Years ago in the stands at a Harding Academy football game, she noticed our son, James, reading a Magic School Bus book. She chatted with him about it, and on Sunday morning brought him a tote bag full of Magic School Bus book that went everywhere he went for a long time. Not long ago, I reminded Betty of her gift and told her James recently graduated from medical school. She grinned from ear to ear. When I heard of Betty's passing, I told James. He thought about it for a minute then told me exactly where he was standing in College church when she gave him the books. We still have that tote bag of special books. I feel sure there are thousands of stories like this. Betty loved all children. Dear Betty was also my favorite professor in her very first year to teach at HU, and my children were the beneficiaries of my knowledge of children's literature. I was the beneficiary of 25 years of her sweet, sweet friendship. Praying now for all who knew and loved this wonderful, gentle, Godly lady.*

carolyn kee - February 20, 2017 at 09:06 PM

VE

“ *My deepest sympathy and prayers. Harding class of 1977.*

Vicki Emery - February 20, 2017 at 08:59 PM

LW

“ Dear Mr. Zearl and family,
We extend our sympathy and ask for God's blessings and comfort.
Mrs. Betty was a wonderful inspiring Christian woman and mentor. I
treasure all of her wonderful motherly advice.
Love,
Liza, Chris, Fenley, Henry, and George Wright

Liza (Freeman) Wright - February 20, 2017 at 08:57 PM

JM

“ Dr. Watson was one of my very favorite professors at Harding in the
early nineties. I always looked forward to her books and her
enthusiasm. After becoming a teacher in Searcy I have enjoyed
seeing her over the years . She has positively impacted so many
lives and she will be greatly missed!

Jenni Mabry - February 20, 2017 at 08:55 PM

TP

“ Betty was a sweet, kind, and talented lady. My sympathy and love
for each family member and devoted friends. "May God grant you
peace and courage."

Treva Lou Terrell Pryor - February 20, 2017 at 08:40 PM

TE

“ Dr. Watson taught me what it means to read to those who can't or
won't. I looked forward to her reading to the class every day. She
will be missed.

Teresa Evans - February 20, 2017 at 03:58 PM

JM

“ *Beautiful woman, inside and out! My love and sympathy to the family. I was saddened to learn of her passing. May God bless and comfort each one of you.*

Jane Musick - February 20, 2017 at 01:30 PM

SP

Betty will be deeply missed by family and friends. It has been a privilege to share grandchildren, and I am confident that her love for early childhood reading has impacted the lives of Mackenzie and Josiah, our shared grandchildren. She gave them what she did best in her career. We have all been blessed. I will miss her; we all will!

Sandy New Parham - February 20, 2017 at 09:00 PM

MM

She taught with her spirit, not just her mind, and molded hundreds of teachers!

Mark McLean, Harding U. class of 1977

Mark McLean - February 20, 2017 at 10:06 PM

JM

Zearl and family. I was saddened to learn of the passing of Betty. She was a wonderful Christian lady in all aspects of her life. May God bless and comfort all of you during this time.

Jo Mathis

Jo Mathis - February 21, 2017 at 08:20 PM

BS

*40 years ago I sat in her classes - one of many things she taught us was to read everyday to our class - I still do that, and find it the most rewarding part of the day with students. Thank you, Dr Watson! Blessings to her loved ones.
Bob Schwenker, San Antonio, TX*

Bob Schwenker - February 21, 2017 at 08:50 PM

SK

I was a very young Christian when they came into my life. Zearl and I bowled together for Harding. He nurtured me both spiritually and in bowling. But they both embraced my wife and I as we were growing in the Lord learning how to become more mature Christians. We agree with so many others; both were excellent examples of striving to be disciples for the Lord. God has and will bless you Zearl and family, while she is welcomed into her eternal inheritance. God's grace be with you all.

Steve & Marsha Kloske '76

Steve & Marsha Kloske - February 22, 2017 at 04:45 PM