



## Mildred Opal Bailey

May 16, 1918 - February 18, 2025

Despite her family's long-held belief that she would outlive them all, Opal Bailey left this life and went to rest with Jesus on February 18, 2025, three months short of her 107th birthday.

Mildred Opal Bailey was born to Will and Molly Woodard on May 16, 1918, in Tuckerman, Arkansas. The middle child of a sharecropping family who lived through the Depression, Opal learned at an early age the value of family, hard work, and faith.

Not long after graduating from Tuckerman High School in 1936, while attending a singing event, Opal met Raymond Henley Bailey who became her husband and the love of her life.

In the early 40s, son, Karyl Vaughn, and daughter, Rayma Jean, were born to Raymond and Opal, and Opal raised them alone for two years while Raymond served in WWII. A few years after the War, Opal supported Raymond as he became a lifelong educator and preacher, his career taking them to at least six states and nearly three dozen congregations. During these years, she also began her long career in business, working as a credit manager at several

department stores and later at H&R Block where she prepared tax returns well into her 80s.

As Raymond and Opal's family grew over the years, Opal's role expanded to mother-in-law to Marcella (Karyl), and Lou Boccio (Rayma), grandmother to Lori (and Charles) Bailey Vesperman, Lance (and Tracy) Bailey, and Rebecca (and Al) Boccio Schirmer. But her favorite family role was great-grandmother to her "Abadoos," Tyler (and Audrey) Vesperman, Bailey (and Frank) Vesperman Manhire, Hayden Bailey, and McKinlee Bailey.

Opal loved to read and spent countless hours outdoors—working in her flower beds or running the weed-eater (even into her 100s!). She adored birds (especially cardinals) and always had food for them. She was an avid sports fan, especially enjoying football and any game her family members coached or played in. She could spend hours bargain shopping with her sisters, and she especially enjoyed shopping trips with family to the garden center at Lowe's!

Never to be taken too seriously, Opal was a kid at heart and had a quick wit. She'd often eat dessert before dinner and never missed an opportunity to play with her great-grands. Opal was always eager to go and do, whether to a grandkid's or great grandkid's performance or sporting event, on a short day trip or on vacation to the Northeast, Canada, or Europe.

Fiercely independent and tenacious, there was little Opal could not do. Whether she was navigating the Depression and raising toddlers alone during the War, working outside the home before it was widely done, starting over in

her early 80s after her beloved husband died, or undergoing surgery and recovering at age 102, Opal lived her life with strength and courage. Her family knew never to underestimate her and always to expect her to do the impossible and unexpected.

Of all the roles Opal played during her life, her most cherished was being a Christian. She loved God fiercely and lived her life in faithful obedience to Him. Worshipping with her church family and sharing the Lord's communion was always a priority for her. Here in Searcy, Opal was a member of the Cloverdale Church of Christ and the College Church of Christ, but her faith and love for the Lord went far beyond her church membership and formal service in the church. She talked to God daily, thanking Him for His provision and blessings, always asking Him to grow His church and help her to be a good example. Opal constantly expressed gratitude, and always talked about how blessed she was.

Everyone who knew Opal considered her to be amazing, incredible, extraordinary. To her family, she was legendary. Preceding her in death were her parents and her beloved husband; sister, Clara Mae Bowen; and brother Oscar Woodard and other inlaws and cousins. Remaining behind are her immediate family and sisters, Ethel Elizabeth Milam and Johnnie Jean Harkrider of Searcy, along with numerous other extended family and church family members who celebrate Opal's life and rejoice that she is home.

Her family especially wishes to thank Kathy Gilpin, the staff at Providence Assisted Living and Arkansas Hospice, and the medical team at Unity Hospital for their exceptional compassion and care of their beloved Grandmother.

Memorial donations may be made in Opal's honor to Timothy Hill Ranch at [www.timothyhill.org](http://www.timothyhill.org).

Funeral services will be conducted on Tuesday, February 25, 2025, at 11:00am, at Powell Funeral Home in Searcy. Visitation will precede the service, beginning at 10:00am. Interment will be private.

Arrangements are entrusted to Powell Funeral Home of Searcy. [www.powellfuneralhome.net](http://www.powellfuneralhome.net)

# Cemetery Details

## Pine Crest Memorial Park

7401 Hwy. 5 North  
Alexander, AR 72002

# Previous Events

## Visitation

FEB 25. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Powell Funeral Home & Cremation Services (Searcy)  
2602 W. Beebe-Capps Expy  
Searcy, AR 72143  
(501) 268-7220  
searcy@powellfuneralhome.net  
<https://www.powellfuneralhome.net/>

## Funeral Service

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# Tribute Wall

MR

“ We are so sorry Rebecca wish we met her she sounds like a wonderful woman and grandma  
love maryanne and ray

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**maryanne and ray** - March 09, 2025 at 04:14 AM

AB

“ So sorry to hear of the loss of Ms Opal. May God give you comfort for the days ahead.  
Annie Brent

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**Annie Brent** - February 27, 2025 at 09:51 PM