



Bettie J. Smith-Desha

November 26, 1939 - May 28, 2021

Bettie Smith Desha passed away quietly on Friday, May 28, 2021, after valiantly fighting breast cancer for fifteen years. She was preceded in death by her sister Margaret North, and brother Jack King (wife Ruth Ann). She is survived by her other brother, Jack's twin, John King (and wife Patsy). She is also survived by the love of her life, Danny Desha, to whom she was married since September 9, 1988. In addition to her husband, Bettie leaves behind many dear friends and her children: son Ronald Robbins (and wife Julia); daughter Virginia LeaBeth Bankston (husband Ray).

Bettie was a proud grandmother to Heather Ledbetter, Megan Ledbetter, Jim Robbins (and wife Brittini), David Robbins (and wife Whitney), Katherine Gonzales (and husband Benjamin), Michael Bankston, Bobby Bankston (deceased), and Daniel Cover. Her great-grandchildren include Emerson Robbins, Evelyn Robbins, Gabriel Bankston, Celeste Bankston, Makenzie Yarbrough, Carter Holman, Rowan Gonzales, and Luca Gonzales.

Bettie was born in Paris, Texas, on November 26, 1939. She often credited her small-town roots with providing the foundation she needed to succeed in life. Growing up the way she did, she learned at an early age that nothing comes for free. To succeed in life meant one had to work hard. She also learned the importance of helping others who may be less fortunate. She said there were two things that contributed to her success. The first was an

unwavering and strong faith in God. “Without God’s guidance, nothing of value could have happened in my life,” she once said. “He gave me the abilities I needed to get along in life, to overcome hardships and to appreciate the many blessings that came my way. I would never have been able to fight cancer for all these years without the strength God granted me.”

The other was also a gift from God. “He gave me a brain and I learned to use it. Whatever obstacles are thrown in our path can always be overcome by thinking through it,” she said. “That is an axiom I have long held to be true. It is absolutely necessary to have brainpower to take advantage of opportunities when they arise. It’s one thing to see the opportunity; it takes brainpower to figure out how to capitalize on that opportunity. That’s how one seizes the opportunity!”

Bettie’s formal education ended at Paris High School. Bettie entered the business world, where she proved her abilities and honed her management skills. She took on a variety of jobs, ranging from making medicinal deliveries, to managing a rental company, and working her way to senior management at AT&T. It was in 1981 that she proved her axiom about brainpower to be true. She was in Tyler on business when she learned that Village Bakery was available for purchase.

“I baked my first cake at the age of twelve. I left out an important ingredient (yeast) and it didn’t rise. But I ate every bite of it myself. From that day forward, I learned to cook and to bake,” Bettie recalled a few years ago when celebrating the bakery’s seventieth anniversary. “When I heard that Village Bakery was available, it was as if God had placed it in my path. I made an offer that day, which they accepted, and I bought the business.”

Bettie operated Village Bakery in Bergfeld Center for thirty-eight years, until she finally sold it in January 2019. “I used many of the recipes the owners I

bought it from had been baking. However, I added a few my own, notably the Italian Crème Cake that is so popular for weddings, and of course, my chocolate cake recipe, which includes the yeast I left out when I was twelve,” she said with a laugh.

Aside from making Village Bakery the most successful and well-known bakery in Tyler, Bettie also became involved in many of Tyler’s local philanthropies. Throughout the years, there have been few that have not benefited from Bettie’s generosity. From donating baked goods to making cash contributions, Bettie has been a major part of the philanthropic community since the day she first rolled into town. Her baked goods were frequently provided to participants at local fun runs benefiting our local medical community, to the homeless community, to the Red Cross, and the Salvation Army, among others. “The reason is simple,” she once explained. “In Deuteronomy 15:11, God commands, ‘For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore, I command you; You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’”

Among the many charitable organizations Bettie has been helping most recently are the March of Dimes, Make A Wish Foundation, Head Start, and Pets for People. Her generosity extended beyond the known organizations to many individuals who were in need, especially children. Those are gifts she made quietly and privately, without fanfare. “It is a blessing to give unselfishly, especially when there is nothing for me to receive in return, other than the knowledge that I have done the right thing in the eyes of God,” she often said when asked why she was so generous toward charity work.

Bettie’s close circle of friends enjoyed dinners together for many years. These were always large groups of people who gathered at various of Tyler’s most popular restaurants for a good meal, good drinks, and good conversation.

Unfortunately, the pandemic put an end to those dinners. Just prior to her death, Bettie spoke about how happy she was that restrictions were being lifted and it appeared that things would soon be returning to normal. She was looking forward to attending another of those dinners with her friends. Sadly, it was not to be. The cancer she had fought so bravely had returned. Her friends and family will miss Bettie, her generous spirit, her loyalty, and her wicked sense of humor. As her beloved Danny points out, "She is now at rest with Jesus in heaven."

Services for Bettie will be held on Saturday morning, June 5th at 10:00 a.m. with visitation starting at 9:00 a.m. at Stewart Family Funeral Home. Pall bearers will be Wayne Ellison, Robert Johnson, Jim Robbins, David Robbins, Brad Gifford, and Daniel Cover. Honorary Pall bearers are Steve Pool, Todd Green, Kevin Cobb, Jackson York, Allen Morris, and Bill Stiles. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that those who wish to do so, please make donations in Bettie's honor to Pets for People, the March of Dimes, the American Cancer Society, or to a charity of your choice.

Cemetery Details

Rose Hill Cemetery

Tyler, TX

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN 5. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

Stewart Family Funeral Home
7525 Old Jacksonville Hwy
Tyler, TX 75703
(903) 581-2008

Service

JUN 5. 10:00 AM (CT)

Stewart Family Funeral Home
7525 Old Jacksonville Hwy
Tyler, TX 75703
(903) 581-2008

Tribute Wall



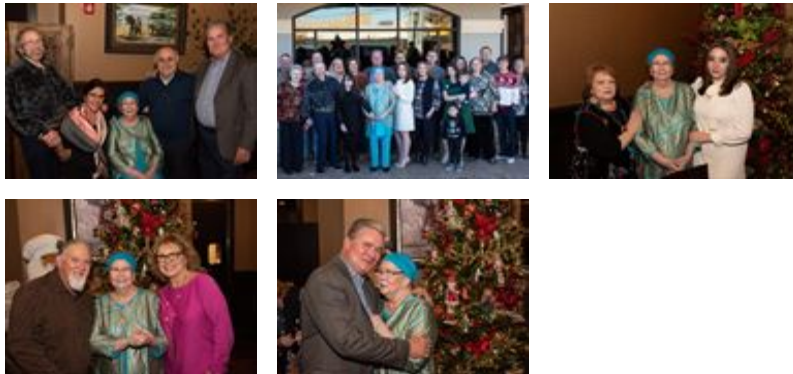
“ *Stewart Family Funeral Home created a Webcast in memory of Bettie J. Smith-Desha*



Stewart Family Funeral Home - June 05, 2021 at 09:43 AM



“ *11 files added to the album Life Tributes*



Stewart Family Funeral Home - June 04, 2021 at 12:34 PM



“ 36 files added to the album Life Tributes



Stewart Family Funeral Home - June 03, 2021 at 05:31 PM



“ The staff of the American Cancer Fund at www.AmericanCancerFund.org is sorry to hear of Bettie’s passing. We have received a memorial donation in her name and our sincere condolences go out to her family.

American-Cancer-Fund - June 03, 2021 at 02:02 PM



“ Dear Families,
What a joy it was to have worked with Betty on various projects - Foster Children Christmas, and when the girls attended All Saints- Her energy and commitment to whatever she did- never wavered! This past year we had reconnected via Facebook- and she continued to encourage whatever I was doing- even in her toughest times.
She will be missed by many within our community- and my prayers will continue in the days ahead- What a legacy she left within the hearts and minds of those that knew her!!!
I know you are home now and enjoying the moments with Jesus- healed and restored ! Kimberly Reed

Kimberly Reed - June 03, 2021 at 01:57 AM

KH

“ Kurt Hunt lit a candle in memory of Bettie J. Smith-Desha



Kurt Hunt - June 02, 2021 at 02:21 PM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Bettie J. Smith-Desha.



June 02, 2021 at 11:21 AM

JC

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Jenny Colgan - June 01, 2021 at 01:12 PM

JC

I'm so sorry that my family and I can't be there to give you our hugs and condolences in person. What a wonderful, vibrant life Aunt Betty lived. May we all be so blessed. Much love to you all! Jenny King Colgan and family

Jenny Colgan - June 01, 2021 at 01:27 PM