



## Betty Jean Bower

February 25, 1932 - March 19, 2026

It is with profound gratitude for a life well lived that we announce the passing of Betty Jean Bower on March 19, 2026. She was 94 years old.

Amidst a blowing snowstorm and while her father's ladies Ready to Wear store burned, Minnie Bea and George W. Rudy welcomed Betty Jean Bower (née Rudy) into this world. Raised in Memphis, a small farming community in Northeast Missouri, on February 25, 1932, Betty Jean Bower was a precocious child. Her only sibling, George Rudy, was 12 years her senior and, at that time, not particularly interested in his bothersome little sister. In a small town during the Great Depression, where everyone knew or was related to everyone, Betty was nurtured by her relatives, friends, and neighbors. This upbringing instilled in her a love for learning, teaching, and community that became an inherent part of her identity.

Betty Jean's family relocated to Jefferson City, Missouri, when she was 12 years old. At the age of 16, she met her future husband, Louis Bower, at a church youth group. Louis was the high school halfback, while Betty was the ambitious socialite who played saxophone in the band at his games. Betty initially contributed to the high school newspaper before transitioning to radio, working for KWOS in Jefferson City and KOMU in Columbia, Missouri. Additionally, she reported and sold advertising for the local newspaper. The Korean War expedited Betty and Louis' courtship, leading to their marriage in

January 1954. Louis was then off to bootcamp, while Betty finished her senior year at the University of Missouri School of Journalism. Her Chi Omega house mother cautioned her against “sharing details of married life” with her single sisters. Betty graduated with a Master’s degree in Journalism from the University of Missouri and later pursued a career as a reporter, feature and wire editor, advertising copywriter, and after a move to Edwardsville, Illinois, a journalism instructor at Southern Illinois University. In 1964, Betty relocated to Pekin, Illinois, where she began writing for the Pekin Daily Times and Peoria Journal Star. Simultaneously, she taught journalism, and English and sponsored the yearbook and school newspaper at Pekin Community High School.

Betty was never just a passive participant; she was always an active and enthusiastic contributor to whatever she took part in, readily accepting leadership roles. Her nature was to be thoroughly involved in everything she did. She was elected President of the Pekin school board for two terms and served on PTO boards. She was active in PEO, AAUW, Historical Society, Garden Club, Chi Omega, and UMW to name just a few. Most of the organizations she belonged to could count on her to take on presidencies. Betty was a natural leader who could delegate, fundraise, and recruit with ease. Wherever she settled, she made it her mission to become involved with her community. She mentored, introduced, and always encouraged those she met to become active in her community’s offerings.

In 1983, Betty and Louis moved to Tyler, Texas. Betty was eager to find her place in the city she had cherished since her childhood visits with her aunt and uncle, Harrietta and Harlie Clark. She immediately started working at the Tyler Courier Times as a feature writer and later published her own Smith County News. Always curious about what was going on in town as well as around the world Betty subscribed to many newspapers and read them cover to cover until her failing eyesight took away that pleasure and she was

relegated to listening to Fox News.

A lifelong music lover with a background in piano and saxophone, Betty became deeply involved with the East Texas Symphony Orchestra. She served as the symphony board president several times, sold ads and solicited financial support from anyone and everyone she encountered. Her efforts were recognized by the Texas Association of Symphony Orchestras for raising over \$1,000,000!

Never one to sit at home, Betty and Louis loved to travel. Being active in Sister Cities, they cultivated many relationships with others around the world. Hosting travelers when they visited her city and including her children and grandchildren in many of their global adventures.

Betty was a dedicated 75-year member of the PEO sisterhood, a philanthropic organization that supports education for women. She was a long-time supporter of Cottey College and the numerous scholarship programs offered through PEO. She was also a founding member of chapter EI Tyler, Texas. Luncheons and Christmas programs were some of her favorite events to host.

Betty, the keeper of family history and lore, cherished the family pieces passed down through generations. She could recount the tales and provenance of most of these treasures. Her family stories were filled with journeys of covered wagons, civil war veterans, midwives, and Masons. She meticulously researched her ancestors, using pictures and tales of those she had known or perhaps only heard of, creating our memories of a bygone era. Betty relished trips back to the family farm in Memphis, where she visited her only cousin and the dwellings and cemeteries where family and friends had once settled. She never tired of antique store explorations and was sure to find the perfect piece for someone's collection.

Long time Methodists, Betty and Louis joined Marvin Methodist Church the Sunday after their moving truck deposited them in Tyler. They were passionate about their Pairs and Parents class and hosted numerous get-togethers at their home or Louis' beloved farm. Betty was actively involved in UMW and the Marvin trustee's board. She enjoyed Wednesday dinners, bible study, musical events and many other activities. Throughout the years, she taught Sunday school and MYF wherever her children were involved.

Betty's three children were her greatest pride and joy. Whether it was music, sports, or schoolwork, she was always there, accompanying them on the piano, cheering them on in the stands, or typing and proofreading their papers. She was deeply involved in and supported their various activities. Betty instilled in them the values of scholarship, dedication, and diligence in everything they participated in. The motto framed on her wall, "When a task is once begun, never leave it till it's done. Be the labor great or small, do it well or not at all," served as a constant reminder of her unwavering commitment.

Betty leaves behind her children, Kevin Bower (Lara), Susan Astroff (Barry) and Kent Bower. Her grandchildren, Mischa Astroff (Kris), Hannah Kline (Kevin), Addison Astroff-Biswas (Abhra), Camille Bower, Genevieve Bower, Charlotte Bower, Bailey Bower, and Bethany Bower. Her great-grandchildren, Margot Kline and Bridget Kline. Her nephew, Clark Rudy (Cindy). Betty's cousin, Nelda Billups, and her constant companion, Thomasina, the cat, complete her cherished family.

We express our deepest gratitude to the staff at Hospice of East Texas, especially Joni Short (also a PEO sister), Teresa Neal, and Rebecca Gray, for their unwavering and compassionate care of Mom.

In lieu of flowers, we kindly request that memorials be made to Marvin

Methodist Church (Eternal Flame), East Texas Symphony Orchestra, Tyler Junior College (Betty Bower and George Rudy scholarship fund), or PEO (Program for Continuing Education).

The world has truly lost a remarkable individual, and we are pretty sure Mom is currently interviewing Jesus for a heavenly feature story.

Godspeed, Mom. You were deeply loved and will be dearly missed.

Memorial services for Betty will be held on Saturday, April 11, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at Marvin Methodist Church in Tyler.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

APR **11**. 10:00 AM (CT)

Marvin Methodist Church  
300 W Erwin St  
Tyler, TX 75702-7131  
(903) 592-7396

## Graveside Service

JUN **13**. 11:00 AM (CT)

Memphis Cemetery  
20120 US 136  
Memphis, MO 63555

# Tribute Wall



“ *East Texas Symphony Orchestra purchased the Pink Tribute Spray for the family of Betty Jean Bower.*



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**East Texas Symphony Orchestra** - April 09 at 10:53 AM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Betty Jean Bower.*



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April 08 at 10:00 PM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Betty Jean Bower.*

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April 08 at 10:00 PM



“ *Cherry Creek friends purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Betty Jean Bower.*



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**Cherry Creek friends** - April 08 at 03:10 PM

CF

“ Cherry Creek friends planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Betty Jean Bower.

Cherry Creek friends - April 08 at 03:10 PM

KR

“ I would credit Mrs. Bower as responsible for my career in journalism and communications as she recruited me to write for the Pekin High School newspaper and later named me the sports editor and editor. Many lessons were learned from her mentoring, leading to my journalism degree and five years working for a daily newspaper and 30+ year career in corporate communications roles. I lost touch when she moved to Texas before my senior year, but I've always appreciated her passion for journalism and her investment in us as her students. Sympathies with the family for your loss.

Kevin Robinson - April 06 at 11:51 PM

LS

“ Mrs. Bower was instrumental in sparking my early interest in journalism. Her thorough and precise nature was one that I endeavored to copy through my career in radio and reporting. May she rest in peace after her great contributions.

Liz Soldwedel - April 04 at 06:16 PM

LM

“ I remember her well from her teaching days at Pekin Community High School. She was a great friend and wonderful teacher. Sorry for your loss.

LaRae Muselman - April 02 at 09:30 PM

CA

“ So sorry for this loss. Chi Omega has lost a sister and friend.

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**carol** - March 25 at 07:29 PM

MF

“ Betty was a woman who contributed much to Marvin Methodist Church over many years. May goodness and joy surround Betty's family during this time of grief. God Bless Betty's family! Marty Fazand

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**Marty Fazand** - March 22 at 11:38 AM

AB

“ So sorry that your mother passed. I have lived next door to them for a long time and I remember your mother and your father. They were great neighbors.

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**Arlene Bergner** - March 21 at 10:24 AM