



Carolyn Wike Batten

June 14, 1942 - May 27, 2026

Carolyn Sue Wike Batten, age 83, went to be with her Lord on May 27, 2026. She was born in San Angelo, Texas on June 14, 1942, to AC and Susie Tannehill Wike. She was the eldest of two daughters and shared a special bond with her beloved sister, Mary Frances Wike.

As a child, Carolyn enjoyed spending time around her father's horse pens, a reflection of her lifelong love of animals. She began playing the piano at an early age under her mother's instruction and possessed perfect pitch, allowing her to play almost anything by ear. Music remained a constant thread throughout her life, as she played for churches, weddings, funerals, and musical theater productions for many years.

Two weeks after graduation from San Angelo Central High School in 1960, she married the love of her life, James Robert Batten, Jr. and moved to Edinburgh, Scotland, where Jim served in the United States Air Force. While living abroad, their first child, James Robert III, was born.

After Jim completed his tour of duty, the family returned to San Angelo, and joyfully welcomed their daughter Francie Lynn, completing their young family. During this time, Carolyn devoted herself to being a stay-at-home mom. She also served as the pianist at her church, often playing alongside her mother, who accompanied her on the organ.

Although she did not attend college, Carolyn was self-taught and intelligent, possessing a wealth of common sense and curiosity. She pursued interests in journalism and photography, working as a reporter for The San Angelo Standard-Times, The Huntsville Item, and The Athens Daily Review. Photography ultimately became her true calling. Carolyn and Jim photographed hundreds of families and weddings, processing film and developing prints by hand in a darkroom they built in their garage.

Soon they opened PhotoGem Labs, bringing quality photo printing to East Texas. They later expanded to include an in-house portrait studio, serving the community for nearly four decades until their retirement in 2013. With Carolyn managing all aspects of the business, PhotoGem became a Tyler icon, and many customers became lifelong friends.

Carolyn had a generous heart, a deep compassion for others, and an extraordinary love for animals. As a permitted wildlife rescuer and rehabilitator, she spent countless sleepless nights caring for injured and orphaned wildlife, including squirrels, skunks, raccoons, beavers, river otters, and even a wallaby. Releasing them back into the wild was often difficult, as she loved them so deeply. She also dedicated herself to rescuing stray cats and dogs and volunteering with local rescue organizations whenever help was needed.

Carolyn's final rescue and special companion was a 12-year old, bob-tailed, tuxedo cat named Doc. When it became necessary to rehome him due to her declining health, a special angel named Amy Miles stepped up to offer him a new, loving home. The family is forever grateful to Amy for this act of kindness.

Family was always at the center of Carolyn's life. Summer trips to North

Carolina created treasured memories filled with beach days, mountain visits, homemade ice cream, and evenings spent playing cards and dominoes. Her greatest joy was her family.

Affectionately known as “Mammy,” Carolyn played an important role in the lives of her grandsons, Will and Clay. She helped with transportation, and faithfully supported their homework and extracurricular activities. She was overjoyed when Will became a veterinarian, and she loved cheering on Clay throughout his baseball career. She proudly (and loudly) embraced her role as an “honorary” Texas Longhorn fan.

Carolyn also loved cooking and hosting family gatherings. Preparing special holiday meals alongside Francie, Kelsi, and Amanda brought her great joy. Her home was always welcoming, her table always full, and those around her always felt loved and cared for.

Raised Southern Baptist, Carolyn later became a devoted member of Fairwood United Methodist Church, where she volunteered in the kitchen, served as an Office Angel, and found great joy ringing handbells alongside Francie.

In 2024, Carolyn was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. Despite the challenges, she faced her illness with remarkable strength, grace, and faith, striving to remain independent for as long as possible. She continued to find joy in time spent with her family, especially her beloved great-granddaughter Jamie, who brought tremendous light into her later years.

In October 2025, she moved to Prestige Estates, where she made new friends and enjoyed activities such as bingo and crafts. She was lovingly cared for by a compassionate staff who became like family. Carla Hardaway and Tami

Coutsombos provided great love and attention in her final days. All who knew her remarked on her sweet spirit, beautiful smile and her joyful nature. The family also extends heartfelt gratitude to Angie Frost, Tanisha Robison and the Paloma Hospice team for their compassion and kindness.

Carolyn was preceded in death by her parents, AC and Susie Wike; her husband of 41 years, James Robert Batten, Jr.; her sister, Mary Frances Wike; her step-father, Winford Baze; and her in-laws, James and Ila Batten.

She is survived by her son, Jim Batten and wife Barbara of Cape Coral, FL; daughter, Francie Hodges and husband Bryan of Tyler, TX; grandsons, Dr. William Hodges and wife Kelsi of Gilbert, AZ; and Clayton Hodges, and wife Amanda of Leander, TX. She is also survived by her great-granddaughter Jamie Hodges of Leander TX and a host of friends including cherished neighbor and confidant Janice Griffin of Dallas, TX.

Carolyn leaves behind a legacy of love, faith, music, and service. She will be deeply missed and forever cherished by all who knew and loved her.

Private graveside services under the direction of Stewart Family Funeral Home are planned for June 8, 2026 at Rose Hill Cemetery in Tyler. A celebration of life will follow at 11:00 a.m. at Fairwood United Methodist Church with Rev. Kimberly Carney officiating. The family invites all to participate in a reception in the Family Life Center following the service.

Donations may be made to Fairwood UMC Memorial Fund, 1712 Old Omen Road, Tyler, TX 75701 (www.fairwoodumctyler.com), Nicolas Pet Haven, 12903 Frankston Hwy, Tyler, TX 75703 (www.nicholaspethaven.org), the Alzheimer's Association of East Texas, 3531 S. Broadway Ave., Tyler, TX 75701 (www.alzalliance.org), or a charity of your choice.

Cemetery Details

Private Interment - Rose Hill Cemetery

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUN 8. 11:00 AM (CT)

Fairwood United Methodist Church
1712 Old Omen Road
Tyler, TX 75701

Reception to follow Service

JUN 8.

Family Life Center

Tribute Wall

DF

“ Our first meeting was over shared church luncheon where we discovered we had both lived in Athens, Next we spent whslith time tinging handbells bu y one another - what fun!
Carolyn helped share my care for Robert Roberson and his false imprisonment. She kept up with his prayer needs and even provided funds for his lunch on one of my visitation days at Polunsky Unit!
What a Ralf Ted, dear andd loving woman and friend.

Donna Farmer - May 30 at 08:55 PM

RM

“ Although we only knew Ms. Carolyn for a few years, she was one you felt as if you'd known forever. We'll remember her sweet smile and wonderful outlook. Our deepest condolences go to her family and friends, as they navigate this difficult time.

Ron and Suer Merritt - May 30 at 12:23 PM

CF

“ Your mom was so kind and a friend. My 2 kitties are happy and healthy because she gave them a chance to live by nurturing them back to health. Doc is their brother. I know she will be missed, but there is comfort in knowing she is well and free from that dreadful disease. 🙏🙏🙏

Charlene Forster - May 30 at 12:06 PM

TP

“ We loved Carolyn and have many memories of good times with her in the mountains, the beach and Rocky Mount. We will miss our contacts thru texts and phone calls. A good friend and wonderful person.

Theresa Pittman - May 30 at 12:04 PM

MG

“ One of the loveliest women I have ever known and worked for years with her sweet husband.
They have been such a part of our lives for many years and leave a beautiful daughter to carry on their fabulous photography work.

Mary Gammell - May 29 at 12:36 PM

KR

“ Kathryn Burnes (Ivy, Ann and Rob) purchased the Ringed by Love for the family of Carolyn Wike Batten.



Kathryn Burnes (Ivy, Ann and Rob) - May 29 at 09:07 AM

KR

“ Kathryn Burnes (Ivy, Ann and Rob) planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Carolyn Batten.

Kathryn Burnes (Ivy, Ann and Rob) - May 29 at 09:07 AM