



# Betty Anne Watkins

FEB 23, 1928 - NOV 4, 2022



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COMPLETE FUNERAL SERVICES

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# Betty Anne Watkins

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**B**etty Anne Watkins, 94, a lifelong resident of Decatur, passed away peacefully of natural causes on Friday, November 4, at Decatur Memorial Hospital.

Betty was born on February 23, 1928 in London, England, a twin daughter of US citizens, Marion G. and Elizabeth “Lye” P. (Gifford) Godwin. Betty attended Mary W. French elementary school, Woodrow Wilson junior high, and Decatur High School. She enrolled at Millikin University and joined Pi Beta Phi social sorority before transferring to the University of Illinois where she earned a B.A. in 1950. In October 1951, Betty married Wayne D. Watkins in Decatur and the couple had four children before divorcing in the late 1960s.

Betty began teaching English and social studies in 1965 and was employed by the Decatur School District for twenty-eight years. She was awarded a Teaching Certificate from Millikin University in 1966, a Masters in Education from the University of Illinois in 1970, and an Administrative K-12 certificate from the University of Illinois in 1980. After teaching in the classroom, Betty went on to work as a language arts and social studies strategist and was Department Head of the Language Arts Department at Thomas Jefferson Middle School from 1973-1980.

Betty served as a state consultant for the Illinois Office of Education, Illinois State Board of Education and the Right to Read Advisory Council. She chaired or authorized curriculum materials for over a dozen publications used in the language arts, social studies, and gifted areas, and conducted workshops throughout the state. She was a contributing author to the state guide to scoring student essays and headed a committee that developed criteria for a state literacy program. Betty held offices in several state and national organizations, including the National Council of Teachers of English, the Illinois Association of Teachers of English, the local chapter of Phi Delta Kappa and the Decatur Education Association. Betty earned numerous awards including Outstanding Coordinator for Gifted, Region V (1984); Professional Merit Award, Millikin University (1989); Alumni of the Year Award, Decatur Leadership Alumni Association (1990); National Association for Community Leadership Distinguished Leadership Award (1990); Those Who Excel, State of Illinois, Merit Award (1990); Service to Mankind Award, Sertoma Service



## Obituary

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Clubs (1992); Civic Leadership Award, Metro Decatur Chamber of Commerce (1995); Lifetime Membership Award, Decatur Area Arts Council (1997); and First Bank's Personal Achievement Award (1998).

Betty was involved in numerous community service organizations. In addition to serving on the Presidential Search Committee for Millikin University, Betty served on the Boards of Directors for Oglesby Mansion, Decatur Area Arts Council, Partners In Education, Symphony Guild, Decatur Leadership Alumni Board, Millikin Alumni Board, Decatur Illini Club, Decatur Daycare Center, and the Shemamo Girl Scout Council. She was a member of the Junior Welfare Association of Decatur from 1953 to 1987 and served as President (1961-62), Vice President, Director, Membership Chairman and Patroness Member. Betty was both a member and officer of PEO Chapter BC and the PTA.

In 1994 at age 67, Betty retired from the Decatur School District after serving as Coordinator of Gifted Services for the Regional Office of Education. She and her identical twin sister, Mary Williams, traveled extensively throughout the rest of the 1990s, sometimes with additional family or friends, until Mary's sudden death in 2009. Betty's kindness, warmth and generosity were apparent to all who met her. She had countless friends in Decatur her entire

life, and dearly loved her children and extended family. Betty leaves behind two daughters, Elizabeth (Libby) Maurer of Peoria, Arizona and Marti Cherry of Euless, Texas, and a son, Bruce Watkins of Lafayette, Colorado. Betty's oldest son, Brian, of Franksville, Wisconsin, tragically passed away unexpectedly in April, 2021. Betty is also survived by her grandsons, Adam G. Watkins and Eric R. Winegar; her granddaughters, Amanda E. Koehlling and Molly S. Watkins; son-in-law Mike Cherry, daughter-in-law Amy Anderson Watkins, nieces Frances, Fey and Romy, and special cousins Janie, Julie, Susie, Nancy, Barb, Jim, Debbie, David and their families.

A one hour visitation starting at noon followed by a memorial service conducted by Father John Henry will be held in Betty's honor on Saturday, November 12, at St. John's Episcopal Church, Decatur. Inurnment will be in the St. John's columbarium. In lieu of flowers, friends are encouraged to give a donation to St. John's Episcopal Church, 130 West Eldorado, Decatur, Illinois 62522.

Condolences may be sent to Betty's family at [www.gracelandfairlawn.com](http://www.gracelandfairlawn.com)






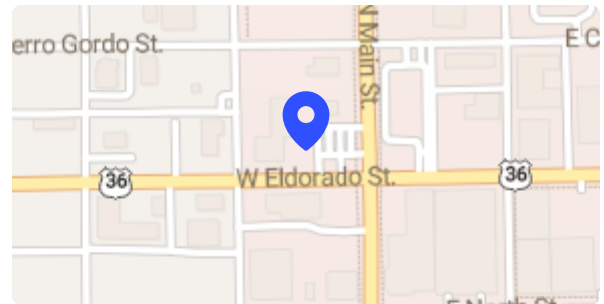
# Events

**Betty Anne Watkins**




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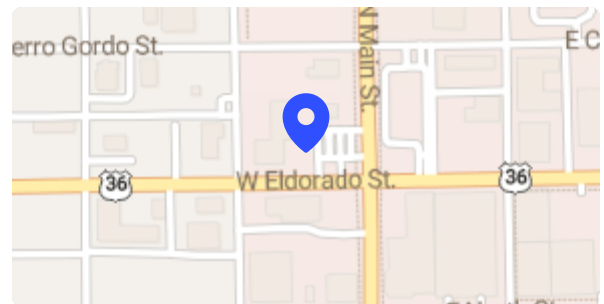
## Memorial Visitation

-  **Saturday**, November 12, 2022
-  12:00 PM - 1:00 PM CT
-  **St. John's Episcopal Church**  
130 West Eldorado, Decatur IL 62522





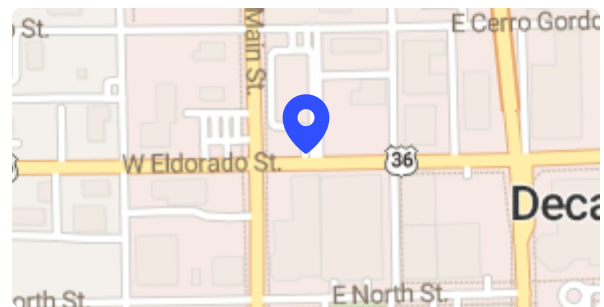
## Memorial Service

-  **Saturday**, November 12, 2022
-  1:00 PM CT
-  **St. John's Episcopal Church**  
130 West Eldorado, Decatur IL 62522



## Entombment

-  **Saturday**, November 12, 2022
-  **St. John's Episcopal Church Columbarium**  
130 E. Eldorado St., Decatur IL 62523





## Tribute Wall

**Betty Anne Watkins**

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**Julia Ubbenga** posted:

While a senior at Millikin, I had the privilege of working under Betty as a student teacher in the spring of 1977. I quickly realized I was fortunate to be working with a teacher of excellence. She stood tall with her calm demeanor yet dynamic methods. I've always recalled that she kidded me about wearing the black pant suit I'd chosen to wear my first day. She said it was a good choice and gave me an air of authority. Later I realized that Betty was figuring I was probably nervous to face Thomas Jefferson students for the first time so she encouraged me with her humor to provide a great start. What a great mentor she was! I've always been grateful to have worked with Betty Watkins. Many of the tips she shared with me were carried throughout my teaching career. Julia Fluss Ubbenga Enumclaw, Washington

November 10 at 3:26 PM



**Sam Reese** posted:

Betty was a surrogate mother to me and my family during the years that I was Coordinator of Music for the Decatur Public Schools from 1982 - 87. She was generous and kind to us, even going out of her way to allow my family of four (with two young children) to live in her rental house on West Main Street for a year. As a professional educator, she mentored me in my very first position as a school administrator. I would have been much slower to learn how administrative patterns worked, who to contact to get things done, who to stay clear of, etc. We shared an office for five years at the Woodrow Wilson administrative center and saw each other almost every day. She was the rock and wise, experienced elder I could count on to help me get through challenging times. We kept in touch all of the years since through Christmas cards, which she never failed to remember to send and which I very much looked forward to receiving. I was fortunate to get to spend an afternoon with her in 2019 and to renew our long friendship and fondness for each other. May God bless the soul of this thoughtful, caring, giving woman. My sincere condolences to all who loved her. Sam Reese, Urbana IL

November 10 at 1:16 PM



**Sue Rehage** posted:

Bruce and Family, May your wonderful memories give you comfort and peace. Sincerely, Sue Rehage

November 10 at 12:01 PM



## Tribute Wall

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JB

**Jean Buttz** posted:

Libby, Marti and Bruce....I am so very sorry to know your mom's passing. I remember all of you so fondly watching you grow up while the members of the Thomas Jefferson English department met at your house weekly for our training so many years ago. Your mom became "Mother" to all of us in the English department. I have been blessed by her friendship for SO many years and cherish the note she sent to me just last week. She was a giant in her service to Decatur Public Schools and our community. I treasure the many years we worked together, socialized, and shared the events of our lives.RIP "Mother". You are loved!

November 10 at 4:37 AM

JA

**Janice Akins** posted:

Betty was a true educator. Those of us in District #61 relied on her knowledge and vision to help our students. It was always a great day when she came to our building to help with our teaching techniques. She was always stately, kind, and generous. She shared her talents with St.John's as well. We will miss her!! Jan Akins, Johns Hill

November 10 at 3:45 AM

MS

**Mark Sorensen** posted:

Marti and family, Betty was a good friend and supported me in many of my activities. Sorry for your loss. Mark W. Sorensen, MacArthur H.S.

November 8 at 11:11 AM



# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Betty by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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