



Betty Waller

June 20, 2021

To many of her students, she was their favorite elementary school teacher. To her friends, coworkers, and extended family, she was a creative and dependable presence, a loyal and kind companion, and a maker of gorgeous quilts and tasty pies and cheesecakes. To her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, she was their adoring, fun, and proud “Gram.” And to her children, she was an incredibly supportive, loving, giving mother who was always there for them, and in their eyes she was most certainly the Best Mom Ever.

Betty Waller died peacefully in her sleep on the evening of June 20, 2021, in Fort Collins, Colorado. Her mind was sharp until the end, but her body finally gave out, and she was diagnosed with pneumonia just a few hours earlier. It was a graceful exit to a life very well-lived. Although she will be greatly missed, we are grateful for the many blessings that she appreciated and that she gave to others during her long life.

Betty Lou Bremer was born on July 15, 1932, at home in Holstein, Iowa, to Albert Bremer and Edna (Wehde) Bremer. She had one younger brother, LuVerne Albert, who died of pneumonia at the age of eight months, when she was four years old. Betty Lou had a happy childhood in Holstein, growing up on an acreage on the south end of Main Street. Living through the Great Depression and World War II, and being of stoic German stock, she learned to be practical and frugal, but she also had a kind and generous spirit and was always there to help others. She attended Holstein Public Schools and graduated in 1950. Betty sang in her high school choir and lettered one year as the manager of the girls’ basketball team. She also enjoyed participating in Rainbow for Girls, was the first President of the Griggs Comets 4-H club (a position that both of her daughters later held), and attended Iowa Girls State (which her daughter Kim later attended).

Betty enrolled at the Nebraska State Teacher’s College at Wayne and graduated with an Elementary School Teaching Certificate in 1952. She taught in Carroll, Nebraska, and Cherokee, Iowa, including serving as the elementary school principal in Cherokee for one year, before her marriage to Norval G. Waller on June 12, 1954, at the Methodist Church in Holstein. They moved to Maryland, where Norval served in the Army for the next two

years and Betty taught at an elementary school in Aberdeen. While living on the East Coast, they enjoyed visiting New York City and Washington, D.C., and Betty had many stories about what it was like to live on the Mason-Dixon Line during the emerging Civil Rights Movement.

With military service completed, they returned to Norval's hometown of Carroll, Nebraska, where Norval farmed and Betty again taught elementary school. In 1957, they moved to Iowa to farm near Holstein. With the arrival of Kimberly Lou in 1957, Kathlene Sue in 1959, and Matthew G. in 1961, Betty was a busy farm wife and mother. A talented seamstress, she sewed many little matching dresses for the girls, sometimes with a matching shirt for Matt. Times were not easy for farmers, and Betty returned to teaching in 1965, initially at the Ida Grove Elementary School, and then for many years at Holstein Elementary and Galva-Holstein Middle School, where she taught sixth-grade math and social studies. She returned to college for night school and summer school to earn a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Buena Vista College in 1967.

As Kim, Kathy, and Matt grew up and became involved in piano lessons, athletics, choirs, drama, and many other activities in school, church, and 4-H, Betty became their biggest supporter, never missing a game, concert, or livestock show (except once during a terrible blizzard and once when she was passing a kidney stone). The family bought some purebred Suffolk ewes in 1969 and showed Waller Farms Suffolk Sheep at county, regional, and state fairs around the Midwest. She was the behind-the-scenes encourager; manager of schedules, deadlines, transportation, and laundry; and the creative inspiration for Holstein Children's Day floats and 4-H projects. She also served as a caretaker for her parents as they grew older.

In 1983, with her children grown, divorce turned Betty's world upside down, but she summoned her strength and courage and moved forward into a new chapter in her life. She moved off the farm and into Holstein. She continued to enjoy teaching, and she especially enjoyed working on a team with her son-in-law Jim. She finally had time to pursue some of her own interests, including quilting and oil painting, the beautiful results of which hang on the walls and cover the beds of many of her friends and relatives. After retirement in 1996, Betty had more time to enjoy with family, including her six grandchildren, and she spent many happy days in the company of friends. She traveled on bus tours around the U.S. and enjoyed "Quilt Shop Hops" throughout the Midwest. She was delighted to earn the "Best in Show" award for one of her quilts at a quilt show in Cherokee. She was able to spend a lot of time with Kim's family in Holstein, serving as the Official Before and After School Chauffeur and Provider of Snacks for Korey and Jaime, and attending most of their home games. She also made the long drive across Nebraska

many times to visit Kathy's family in Colorado and through Iowa and Minnesota to visit Matt's family in Wisconsin.

Betty was a faithful member and volunteer at the United Methodist Church, United Methodist Women, the American Legion Auxiliary, and the Cherokee Quilt Bats. She served on the board of the regional Council Against Domestic Abuse (CADA) and volunteered weekly at their "New Leaf" thrift store in Cherokee. She had a very soft heart and cried easily during poignant movies, TV shows, and even commercials. Her generosity led to drawers full of calendars, return address labels, and small notepads that were sent to her by the charities to which she contributed donations. She was very patriotic, carefully studied political candidates before attending the Iowa caucuses, voted in every election, and loved seeing the "Avenue of Flags" in Holstein several times each year. She had a wonderful sense of humor and was able to see the best in people and situations. She kept in touch with friends from her college and teaching days and hosted or attended their yearly reunions.

Betty was a two-time cancer survivor and enjoyed relatively good health until she reached her eighties. Unfortunately, following a knee replacement in 2012, she developed a neuropathy of her lower body which led to the use of a walker and later a wheelchair. She was able to stay in her home for a few years, but as her health declined, she decided to move into an assisted living facility in Holstein to receive care. In 2016, with no immediate family left in Holstein, at the age of 84 Betty decided to strike out on a new adventure by moving to an assisted living facility near Kathy's family in Fort Collins, Colorado. She made many new friends, enjoyed visiting Rocky Mountain National Park and other scenic drives or sitting in Kathy's backyard enjoying the flowers, loved winning at Bingo, read many books (checking the ending first "to see if it will be worth reading"), and knitted hundreds of hats which she donated to hospitals for babies and to shelters for persons experiencing homelessness. Betty loved playing cribbage for most of her life, and right up until the very end, she usually found some points that we missed and she won many more games than she lost!

In late April of 2020, Betty's health declined further and she moved to a skilled nursing facility. She appreciated the higher level of care, and although her last year was difficult due to the isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, she enjoyed the frequent calls from friends and family and she maintained a cheerful attitude. She was so happy to be able to welcome visitors recently, with all of her children and several grandchildren visiting within the past few months. Betty was a woman of strong, unwavering faith, and she was content, felt that her life had been blessed, and was prepared for and looking forward to her next journey.

Grateful for Betty's maternal love and guidance are her children: Kim and Jim Christensen of Titusville, FL; Kathy and Kevin Mabry of Fort Collins, CO; and Matt and Cindy (Hennen) Waller of Chippewa Falls, WI; as well as grandchildren and great-grandchildren: Korey and Allie (Siville) Christensen and Charlotte of Englewood, CO; Jaime (Christensen) and Taylor Anderson and Blakely of Ames, Iowa; Callie Mabry of Holden Village, WA; Cortney Mabry and partner Ben Stevens of Denver, CO; Dani (Waller) and Grant Hansen and Conrad of Eau Claire, WI; and Ben Waller of Chippewa Falls, WI (who always held a special place in Gram's heart). She also has many nieces, nephews, extended family, and friends who loved her and will miss her. She was preceded in death by her parents, Albert and Edna Bremer; a brother, LuVerne Albert; and an infant granddaughter, Kate Waller Mabry.

The family is planning a memorial service at the Holstein United Methodist Church in Holstein, Iowa, at 1:00 P.M. on July 18, 2021, followed by an informal gathering to celebrate Betty's life in the church's Fellowship Hall from 2:30-4:30 P.M. Casual attire is encouraged. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made in Betty's name to the Holstein United Methodist Church, 208 S. Kiel St, Holstein, IA 51025; Pathfinders at Bethesda Lutheran Church, 123 W. Hamilton Ave, Eau Claire, WI 54701 (this is a ministry for adults with special needs, including Betty's grandson Ben—please designate that the donation is for Pathfinders); or the charity of your choice.

Events

JUL **Memorial Service** 01:00PM
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Holstein United Methodist
208 S Kiel Street, Holstein, IA, US, 51025

JUL **Celebration of Life** 02:30PM - 04:30PM
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