

Hiawatha, KS



Betty Lou French, of Hiawatha, went to be with her Lord & Savior Tuesday afternoon, December 1, 2020, at the home of her daughter and son in law with whom she shared a home for the last two years. She was 92.

Betty Lou (as her Highland friends and family knew her) was born August 31, 1928, near Troy, KS, one of four children born to William Everett and Verlie Mae Clary Colley. She was a lifelong resident and main stay of NE Kansas. She attended rural country schools at the Brown-Doniphan County line (she would tell of walking uphill both ways). When they moved to Highland, the kids had to stay in town to go to school. She would get so homesick, she would get a ride home, only to have her father return her to school. Betty Lou graduated from Highland High School and later earned a teaching certificate from Highland Junior College. While going to high school, she worked at French's Café over her lunch hour.

She was a longtime member of the Christian Center in Hiawatha, where she served as Sunday school superintendent and Sunday school teacher. Betty Lou had three longtime childhood friends whom she always enjoyed getting together with 3 times a year (with the help of their daughters) to celebrate birthdays. Ruthie, Leola (who died 12 hours earlier), and Beverly.

She met her husband William Eugene "Bill" French while they were attending high school. They later married in Highland on April 30, 1949. She taught in one room school houses in Sparks and later Powhattan while Bill worked at the Hiawatha Greenhouse. She and Bill were instrumental in starting the Day Care Center, one of the first of such to help handicapped children and adults. She started working part-time during the day at the Greenhouse and waiting tables in the evening at the Maple Leaf Restaurant in Hiawatha. If you EVER went to the Greenhouse to buy flowers or bedding plants, and you met Betty at the counter, you know that she would undoubtedly share her opinion (true to her conviction, she would say). Bill and Betty later made Hiawatha their home where they raised their family. When the kids were young, they would sell fireworks for the Fourth of July over on the east edge of Highland. Then as the kids grew, they started decorating family floats for the Hiawatha Halloween Parade. Betty would be the 'brains,' and Billy would 'make it happen.' Even as their children started having children, this was still part of who they were... sometimes not starting work on the float till just a few days beforehand! They enjoyed serving the Hiawatha-Highland communities, spreading joy

throughout the area with their flowers. Every year at Christmas, she enjoyed going to the area nursing homes, delivering a small poinsettia grown by Bill. They were also foster parents for a few years. Their ministry also included making a home for several gospel groups over the years. She would work all day, then come home to cook for anywhere from 4 to 15, then do laundry so the groups could go traveling for the week, all the while, never complaining. She had a thing about everything having to be ironed... not so sure she didn't iron underwear! The Post Office will definitely operate in the red from this time forward... Betty, for years and years, was very dedicated to sending out cards... always signed "love and prayers." And we can't forget about the "Bettyisms!" Bill died in 2014.

Also preceded in death by her parents, sisters Geneva (Albert Wagner) and Lillie Marie (Leonard Blevins), a brother William Everett "Bud" Colley, Jr., sister-in-law Kay Lynn Stahl, and adopted son Tim Petersen.

Survivors include her children: Beverly Brock (Jay) of Hiawatha, Tony French (Lanna) of Highland, sister-in-law Mary Lou Colley of rural Highland; six grandchildren MaLynda, Mandy (Keith), Erin (Aaron), Kelly, Katelin, Emily (Ethan); 4 great-grandchildren: Brock & Gabriel and Ava & Micah.

Friends may call at Chapel Oaks Funeral Home in Hiawatha from 12 noon until 6 p.m. Sunday.

Private family graveside service will be held at Highland Cemetery.

We regret not being able to open the service to our friends and ask for your understanding in knowing we are trying to keep everyone safe.

Memorial contributions are suggested to Defeating Brock's Giant, sent in care of the funeral home, 124 S 7th St., 66434. A note of sympathy or remembrance may be sent to the family at www.chapeloaksfuneralhome.com