



Della Craighead

August 17, 1917 - March 31, 2018

To those who esteemed Della Craighead, William Wordsworth best described her “. . . a perfect woman, nobly planned, to warn, to comfort, and command and yet a Spirit still and bright with something of angelic light.” Although she would be the first to protest his words regarding her, she would be the first to compliment the words themselves. Born August 17, 1917 in Durant, Oklahoma to Wallace Wesley and Dora May Albright Gates, Della graduated from Southeastern Oklahoma State University and later at Oklahoma State University in 1935 at age 18. She began her long career first teaching Home Economics at Albany, Oklahoma and went on to Union Valley to teach high school English from 1940-42.

She married Emery Manes Craighead in 1941 saying, “He was the only man I ever loved from the first moment I saw him.” She began substitute teaching circa 1958 at Bartlesville College High School after Manes was transferred from Borger to Bartlesville in 1954 with Phillips Petroleum Company. She began teaching fulltime in 1960 at College High School. During this time, she completed her Master’s Degree at Tulsa University. She later taught at Sooner High beginning in 1966. Ironically, after a varied teaching background, her first love was Chemistry which she was never able to practice. She often shared that the Lord had put a mantle on her so that she knew she would be a teacher – the only goal in her life. It was her dream. She prayed every day, “God, this is your classroom, not mine.”

Della was the first inductee into the Bartlesville Educators Hall of Fame with the induction speech given by Rita Thurman Barnes, Col-Hi Class of 1965. Active for many years in the Christian Church – Disciples of Christ, she joined the Methodist Church in the 1980s and sang in the choir until 2013. Her other memberships included: Musical Research Society, Alpha Delta Kappa Honorary Education Sorority, League of Women Voters, Bartlesville Garden Club, Church Women United, Women’s Network, and various book clubs. She also served on the Boards of the Bartlesville Library and the Cookson Hills Cherokee Indian Center near Tahlequah.

Believing strongly in Christ’s exhortation to carry the Gospel into all the world, Della’s works of faith began on her doorstep. First and foremost, nothing would ever surpass her love of family including her late husband Emery Manes Craighead and her daughters Marion Pulsifer and Cathryn Lamb and their families, Carl Craighead and family and her late and beloved sons, Emery and Keith Craighead. Cherished by all her students, Della’s Sooner Class of ’68 student, Karen Kleinschmidt Bushyhead wrote to Della saying in part, “You have been such an inspiration to your students. If you took a poll of all the students who graduated from Bartlesville high schools during a certain time span, I think Della Craighead would definitely win as Most Influential Teacher. You were certainly my favorite, not only for the lessons you taught me about English, but for those you taught me about life.”

After a most admirable lifetime of teaching in the Bartlesville Public School System, Della retired in 1979. But, seated and idle she would not be. Her life was a full one as she continued to volunteer her time and talents in her “hometown”. She often spoke about being a greeter at her church door and of how she loved to pick up friends in her VW convertible and drive them to the outdoor church service held at Eastland Shopping Center. But, she loved music so much that, as a young woman, she became First Chair violin at

Durant High School and at Southeastern Oklahoma State University and she taught herself clarinet, so she could be in the band. She learned piano, so she could work as a pianist for the local silent movie theaters. But, her life was more than music and *The Canterbury Tales* and travel to distant lands.

She often pondered why her living years were extending beyond a century, but she trusted her Creator to appoint the time and place of her departure. She often quoted these words from Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 which say, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven; A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted." She'll be missed forever but her wit and wisdom will echo down from Canterbury through the ages. "Now lat us ryde, and herkneþ what I seye. And with that word we ryden forth oure weye, And he bigan with right a myrie cheere His tale anon, and seyde as ye may heer. - Now let us ride and hearken what I say. - And at that word we rode forth on our way; And he began to speak, with right good cheer, His tale anon, as it is written here." And here ends the last quatrain from her favorite work by Chaucer - the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*. Until then, Della. Until then.

Della discussed with her family how she would like her life to be remembered. That's when the decision was made for contributions in her name to be made to a memorial for long-term investments in fine arts and music that will benefit a variety of students in the Bartlesville public schools over many years. These investments will be directed at the discretion of the faculty who always know, she said, what the students need. Given the current news on the dire condition of Oklahoma schools, her family feels that God has directed her in this determination.

The Bartlesville Public School District is very thankful for this designation of gifts and any contributions in her memory will be so directed: "Della Craighead Memorial Fund, Bartlesville Public Schools", Attn: David Boggs, Chief

Financial Officer, 1100 S. Jennings, Bartlesville, OK 74005, (918) 336-8600
ext. 3520.

Tribute Wall

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“ *Posted by Linda Albright Wilkins from Dallas, Texas
Please accept my sympathies for your loss. Mrs. Craighead was my English teacher in 1970 and has remained my most influential teacher throughout my college and graduate school years. She made a true difference in my life and I am very grateful to have known her as a student.*

04/12/2018 at 09:46pm

*Posted by suzanne cunningham from Oka city, Oklahoma
Oh, dear Della- what an inspiration she was- not only to those she taught but also to those who taught beside her. Her obituary summed up a wonderful life well lived. She was an amazing person, and i was privileged to have known her and to teach with her at College High and then Sooner High. suzanne cunningham*

04/15/2018 at 10:30pm

*Posted by Bob/Imogene Peaster from Dewey, Oklahoma
What a wonderful neighbor and friend Della & Family were to my parents, Alfred & Edna Peaster. And what a wonderful fun she was to all of us. We loved her like she was our grandmother. Wonderful lady, Wonderful teacher, wonderful friend, outstanding neighbor. We loved her. Thanks Della for being someone you could talk to and give good advice. Bob & Imogene Peaster*

04/21/2018 at 03:04pm

Davis Family Funeral Home - November 30, 2018 at 01:03 PM