



Marjorie Bowers Paxson

August 13, 1923 - June 17, 2017

Marjorie Bowers Paxson, was born August 13, 1923, in Houston, Texas to Rowland B. and Marie Margaret (Bowers) Paxson.

As a child, she knew she did not want to become a nurse or teacher, unsure of her career path until she took a high school journalism course. From then on, Paxson knew she wanted to be in the newspaper business and a journalist. Paxson's high school teacher was a journalism graduate of the University of Missouri. A teacher that had so much impact and impression on Paxson she decided to study journalism at his alma mater in Columbia.

Paxson's parents approved of her decision with one request, she first attend Rice University of Houston for two years before moving forward with her dream. At Rice, Paxson worked on the Student Newspaper (Thresher).

In 1942 Paxson transferred to the University of Missouri, where she worked on the Columbia Missourian, which was a big factor in her life and helped her get her first job for the town newspaper. Paxson graduated in 1944 then went to work for the United Press in Lincoln, Nebraska for twenty-five dollars a week. After World War II ended, Paxson, like many other temporary female journalists was forced out of her job to make room for returning veterans. Still pursuing her dream, Paxson landed a job with the Associated Press in Omaha, Nebraska, before moving back to Houston, Texas where she worked at the Houston Post and Houston Chronicle.

In 1952, Paxson became the women's editor at the Houston Chronicle in a managerial position, providing her more opportunity to oversee the staff of

seven. Paxson worked four years at the Chronicle. Paxson knew she needed a new challenge and began sending resumes across the country in search of a new job. Paxson soon received a response from Dorothy Journey of the Miami Herald. Paxson traveled to Miami where she began to work as a Copy Editor for the women's page. Paxson found mentors in Journey and the assistant women's editor, Marie Anderson, staying until 1968. During this time in Miami, wide-ranging social and political changes were taking place all over the country. Paxson and her colleagues lobbied for new topics such as birth control, the sexual revolution, and women's health issues to be published in the women's section.

In 1963, she was elected President of Theta Sigma Phi (now known as The Association for Women in Communications). She transformed the group from a sorority into a professional organization, traveling over 75,000 miles to meet with members. During her presidential tenure, the association established a national headquarters in Austin, Texas, where she transformed a modest organization into a journalistic social sorority concept with a professional approach. In 1968, Paxson unexpectedly received an offer to become the women's editor of the St. Petersburg (Florida) Times. Paxson decided to take the job.

In 1970, Paxson went from women's editor to assistant feature editor. A man was given her position as editor of the news section. Shortly thereafter, Paxson was notified that the Times had won a J.C. Penney University of Missouri Journalism Award which recognizes the nation's top reporters and editors working in women's page journalism. In 1970, Paxson landed her next new job at the Philadelphia Bulletin which still had a women's section. Within a short time, the Bulletin eliminated the women section, and Paxson was once again exiled back to the Sunday magazine as associate editor. In 1975, while she was at the Bulletin, she was named editor of Xilonen. This was an eight-page daily newspaper published for the United Nations World Conference for International Women's Year held in Mexico City.

When Paxson returned to Philadelphia, she found that the Bulletin was in

financial trouble. By then she was 53 years old and concerned she would be unable to find another job. She contacted Al Newharth, a former colleague who was head of Garnett Company. She joined Garnett in 1976 as assistant managing editor at the Idaho Statesman in Boise, Idaho. The same year, Paxson won the Women in Communication Headliner Award. Two years later Paxson became publisher and editor of the Public Opinion in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. In 1980 Garnett named Paxson publisher of the Muskogee, Oklahoma Daily Phoenix. Upon her arrival in Muskogee she was informed by the Phoenix's former owner and publisher, Tams Bixby III, that it was his policy that women at the paper could not wear pants. Paxson, never a shrinking violet came in the next day wearing a pantsuit. Paxson held a meeting and announced she would not dictate a dress code as long as employees dressed appropriately for work. Times have changed since Paxson first entered the field of journalism.

In 1986, Paxson opted for early retirement from Garnett, where she remained in Muskogee and continued to write a column for the Phoenix. Paxson donated \$50,000 to the National Women and Media Collection. Paxson has traveled to over 50 countries and walked in Antarctica. She traveled to the Great Wall of China and has visited Egypt. The "Legacy" Marjorie Bowers Paxson would like to be remembered for is Mexico City, the Newspaper, Xilonen, and for changing Theta Sigma Phi into a more professionally oriented organization. These were three of the most important things in her life and were held very close to her heart. She would like to be remembered for paving the way for women in communication.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Rowland B. and Marie Margaret (Bowers) Paxson; brother, John Paxson and wife Margaret.

Marjorie is survived by her niece, Kristen Paxson Gajdowski; nephew, Timothy Paxson; and great niece, Kathryn Gajdowski.

A special thank you to Marjorie's personal caretakers, Miss Tina Patterson, Miss Ada Gronowski, Miss Gloria Brothers, Miss Lacrishia Patterson, and Miss

Cherrelle Patterson for their love and kindness to Marjorie, also the staff at Hometown Hospice, and loving friend Ann Henary.

In lieu of flowers the family requests memorials be made to Grace Episcopal Church.

A celebration of Marjorie's life will be held at 11:00 A.M., Saturday July 8, 2017 at Grace Episcopal Church with Reverend Bob Wickizer officiating.

Interment will follow at Greenhill Cemetery.

Cemetery Details

Greenhill Cemetery

1500 N. York Street
Muskogee, OK 74403

Previous Events

Service

JUL 8. 11:00 AM (CT)

Grace Episcopal Church
218 N. 6th Street
Muskogee, OK 74401

Tribute Wall



“ *Marjorie Bowers Paxson*

October 23, 2023 at 09:38 AM



“ *1 file added to the album New Album Name*



Corkey Snyder Waite - May 08, 2018 at 11:23 PM



“ *Marj changed the Phoenix in many ways, including allowing female employees to wear pants! The Bixbys enjoyed seeing women's legs and in an era of pants being accepted everyplace else, we could not wear them to work. it didn't matter that we might be climbing ladders or bearing frigid cold; we had to wear skirts. Thanks Marj for bringing us into the real world!*

Liz McMahan - June 25, 2017 at 07:37 PM

MT

“ We will always have fond memories of Marj as the publisher of the Muskogee Phoenix! There are a couple of us here at Oklahoma Press Association that worked here at OPA in the 1980's and remember her well. It was always funny how she was such a tough person, but always had a wonderful smile on her face. She made it fun for us to visit the Phoenix, and she made the paper and the community better in her years there! Mark Thomas and Jennifer Gilliland, Oklahoma Press Association

Mark Thomas - June 22, 2017 at 12:04 PM

LD

“ My friend and I have worked as her housekeepers for at least 20 years. We enjoyed being there very much, we just left her home the day she entered the hospital. We had a nice visit with her not knowing that would be our last time to see her. She was a part of us and will be missed. Condolences to her family.

linda delmedico - June 19, 2017 at 08:16 PM