



## Ruth C. Bates

April 25, 1922 - November 10, 2021

Ruth C. Bates, 99, a 40-year Muskogee resident, died peacefully on Wednesday, Nov. 10, 2021.

Ruth was born April 25, 1922, in Columbus, Ohio, 30 minutes ahead of her twin sister, Jean, to Bruce and Dr. Irene Converse. After their father died when they were three, Ruth and Jean were raised by their mother, who juggled the demands of raising twin daughters with her studies at The Ohio State University College of Medicine, where she was one of only a handful of women earning a medical degree.

Growing up in Columbus the sisters were inseparable, enjoying pool parties that were chronicled in the Columbus Dispatch, earning badges in the Eagle Patrol of Girl Scouts Troop 30, making the honor roll, and serving on the North High debate team. Both sisters also overcame polio during the worst of the epidemic.

In 1933, Ruth's mother later married engineer Florian J. Werthmann, who after World War II studied to become a doctor himself. His work took the family to the remote city of Valdez, Alaska, 20 years before the territory became a state, where Ruth and Jean attended school while their mother ran a small hospital. The family later relocated to Seattle, where Ruth graduated from high school. She attended the University of Washington, working as a radio telephone operator for the Army Signal Corps until graduating in 1944 with a bachelor's in business and economics. One day out of curiosity she attended a campus recruiting visit by film star Irene Rich and her daughter, Frances,

who was serving in the Navy's Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service (WAVES) officer training program. After they graduated from college Ruth and Jean joined the officer training program, with the Seattle Times society page even featuring a "Twins in WAVES" headline.

Following her training at Smith College, Ruth was stationed at Hunter's Point in San Francisco, where she worked as cryptographer decoding messages while Jean worked nearby on submarines. In later years Ruth would laugh recalling how one of Jean's colleagues reported her for being seen on leave walking around San Francisco when she was supposed to be on duty, only to find out she had mistaken Ruth for her twin.

One night in July 1945 Ruth and a colleague were working a routine 2 to 10 p.m. shift when they were suddenly ordered to stay through the night under lockdown. Decoding top secret messages under the watchful eye of U.S. Marine guards and supervised by an officer from the nearby USS Indianapolis, they had no idea what they were working on. Three weeks later they learned the atomic bomb that would be dropped on Hiroshima was being loaded onto the ship that night.

During a visit with her friends to the Officer's Club she met James E. Bates Jr., a Fort Gibson native serving as an officer on the USS Pennsylvania, which was having its guns overhauled in San Francisco. Jim hit a \$25 jackpot on a dime slot machine. Ruth and her friends helped him pick up the coins, prompting him to invite her to dinner on board the battleship, where officers had the privilege of dining on steak. Soon after they became engaged. When Jim's ship was torpedoed in the last days of World War II off Okinawa, killing 20 of his shipmates, Ruth's friends hid the news from her until it was confirmed that no officers had been killed.

She and Jim were married in Seattle on November 1, 1945, and raised three sons, moving to Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas, Virginia and, eventually, Canoga Park, Calif. where Jim served as a civilian in the U.S. Air Force with Ruth teaching 5th and 6th grades for more than 20 years. She was a beloved teacher at Fullbright and Winnetka elementary schools, going out of her way

to tutor children in reading, helping them stage an annual puppet show featuring figures from American history and getting to know their parents and siblings. She was honored by the PTA for her work in reading, and earned her master's in education at California State University, Northridge.

After retiring Ruth and Jim moved to Muskogee, where Jim's family lived. Ruth became active in the Daughters of the American Revolution, continued to tutor students in reading, attended the Presbyterian Church of Muskogee and spent numerous Saturdays at University of Oklahoma football games with Jim, an alum. In 2013, the Muskogee Phoenix chronicled their war service. In 2015, friends and family celebrated their 70th anniversary. Jim and Ruth were married 73 years before his death in 2019.

Ruth is survived by her sons John (Linda) of Tulsa, William of Muskogee and James (Denise) of Arcadia, Calif.; grandchildren Johnny (Kristin) of Oklahoma City, Laura Sherrill (Marc) of Nevada City, Calif., Tara Gellene (Clinton Miller) of Bloomfield, N.J., Michael Bates of South Pasadena, Calif., Jeanette Bates of Cypress, Calif., and Natalie Cole (Tyler McQuiston) of Washington, D.C.; great-grandchildren Elizabeth Sherrill of Nevada City and Ava and Cooper McQuiston of Washington, D.C.; niece Sharyn Pankey (Larry) of McKinney, Texas; niece Ann Sharp and nephew Robert Sharp, both of Berkeley, Calif. She was preceded in death by her husband Jim, her parents and her sister, Jean, of Oakland, Calif.

Services are at 1 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 17, at Cornerstone Funeral Home, 1830 N York St, Muskogee, OK 74403. Donations may be made to the Oklahoma Literacy Coalition. 5830 NW Expressway, #196 Oklahoma City, OK 73132 <https://okliteracy.org/donate-to-olc/>

# Cemetery Details

## Memorial Park Cemetery

7600 Old Taft Rd.  
Muskogee, OK 74401

# Previous Events

## Service

NOV 17. 1:00 PM (CT)

Cornerstone Funeral Home Chapel  
1830 N. York St.  
Muskogee, OK 74403

# Tribute Wall



“ *Cornerstone Funeral Home & Crematory created a Webcast in memory of Ruth C. Bates*



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**Cornerstone Funeral Home and Crematory** - November 17, 2021 at 01:59 PM



“ *Ruth C. Bates*

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October 23, 2023 at 09:38 AM



“ *115 files added to the album Life Tributes*



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**Cornerstone Funeral Home and Crematory** - November 15, 2021 at 06:27 PM



“ *Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the family of Ruth C. Bates.*



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November 15, 2021 at 10:27 AM



“ *Wonderful memories of the dearest and best Aunt ever! You will be missed. Thanks for being a huge part of my life and of all the lives you touched. Love you.*

*Sharyn*

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**Sharyn Pankey** - November 15, 2021 at 10:23 AM