



Mary Rose Birkett

August 15, 1952 - January 4, 2026

Mary Rose Francisco Birkett was born August 15, 1952 in Okarche, OK, the beloved daughter of Donald Glenn and Melba Nadine (Beach) Francisco and passed away January 3, 2026 in Bartlesville, OK. She was educated in Hinton Public Schools, beginning as a member of the first kindergarten class in the district. Mary worked as a “soda jerk” at Hinton Drug where her father was proprietor and pharmacist during her high school years, and graduated as Valedictorian from Hinton High School in 1970.

During her time at The University of Oklahoma, Mary was a member of Phi Beta Kappa Society, Angel Flight, and Mortar Board. After completing a B.A. in English with a minor in French, Mary and fellow OU bandsman Thomas Noble Birkett were married at First Methodist Church in Hinton, OK on April 7, 1974. Sue Jones Birkett became her mother in law, and the two shared a special friendship, completing many beautiful sewing projects together, until Sue’s passing in 1988.

Mary and Tom made their first home in Topeka, Kansas, where Mary earned a Masters in Library and Information Studies at Emporia State University. She spent “the best five years of [her] life” in the Kansas City area where she was the first children’s librarian at Bonner Springs Public Library and librarian at Shawnee Mission Junior High. Many years of sharing books with young people followed, including as children’s librarian at Bartlesville Public Library,

preschool teacher at Good Shepherd Presbyterian Preschool in Bartlesville, and librarian at Bartlesville Mid-High School and Richard Kane Elementary School. Mary was a gifted readers' advisor who was able to find the right books and stories to support each student's academic and emotional success. She brought the written word to life, enchanting students by dressing up as Madeline, Johnny Appleseed, and Strega Nona. At Kane Elementary, lessons given in character as "The Word Wizard" made building vocabulary fun. Mary's most eager pupils were her two daughters and three grandchildren, all voracious readers thanks to her guidance.

A lifelong and accomplished musician, Mary began piano lessons in Geary, OK as a small child. She played oboe and clarinet in Hinton High School's marching band, fife in the school jug band, and clarinet in The University of Oklahoma's "Pride of Oklahoma" marching band. While in high school, she was organist at Sacred Heart Catholic Church and First Methodist Church in Hinton, OK. As an adult, she provided piano accompaniment to high school students for contest solos, played piano for the "Shepherd Singers" vocal group, and led numerous children's choirs. She honed her pipe organ skills, taking private lessons and attending the American Guild of Organists conferences in Charleston, WV and Rockford, IL. She served as interim organist at First Presbyterian Church in Pawhuska, OK. Mary had a vast memory for songs of all kinds, including American folk songs, children's songs, Girl Scout campfire songs, hymns, and radio and television jingles. She entertained and charmed all who knew her by having "a song for everything" at the ready to share in her beautiful, clear soprano voice.

Mary enjoyed decades of marriage to her loving husband Tom. They traveled extensively, European cruises and Santa Fe, New Mexico were favorites. Also, many trips were made to support their Oklahoma Sooners football team on the road. A leisurely train ride or two was worked into the itinerary whenever possible, and museums of all kinds expanded their minds. Family

vacations to visit Mary's Italian relatives in Bozeman, Montana and Framingham, Massachusetts were special memories, as well as two trips to Europe for her daughters' high school graduations. Swimming and water play was a must for the kids on summer vacation, and Mary enjoyed it too.

Mary and Tom supported each other's musical projects. He installed a pipe organ in their home so she could practice, she accompanied his clarinet solos on piano, and they sang in church choirs together for many years. They served together on the pipe organ search committee at Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, taking trips to other churches to listen to instruments in order to find the perfect one for their congregation. Mary also enjoyed dressing up to attend all of Tom's performances with the Bartlesville Symphony Orchestra.

After moving to Bartlesville, OK, Mary became a mother to Laura Elizabeth Birkett (Fielder) in 1983 and Anne Kathryn Birkett in 1987. As a mom, she taught her daughters to always think of others and be of service when possible. She was a kind and patient teacher to her daughters, and she had a knack for leading fun activities. Valuable skills Mary passed on included her wonderful cooking and sewing, in addition to her academic knowledge, especially writing and research. She was a Girl Scout leader, a "mother reader" at Wayside Elementary, a member of Parent Support Group at Central Middle School, and a dedicated "cheer mom." Laura and Anne were fortunate to have a patient and understanding mom who rarely said no to a pool day or a cherry limeade from Braum's.

Deeply proud to be an alumna of The University of Oklahoma, Mary told her daughters when they began kindergarten that she "wanted to be able to wear an OU Mom shirt some day." Her dream came true when Laura and Anne attended The University of Oklahoma from 2002-2009, and she relished in

reminding them that they were following in the footsteps of their grandmothers and parents as “third generation on both sides” alumnae. Mary excelled in her role as OU Mom, ensuring that dorm rooms were properly outfitted, snacks were delivered to Norman, and check-in phone calls were frequent. She took a keen interest in her daughters’ studies because she had enjoyed her own, and was eager for them to have the benefit of an OU education which she often said “opens doors.” Mary supported her daughters as students, and her Sooner football team received the same devotion. She was truly one of the “Sooner faithful.”

Mary is survived by her husband Tom Birkett of Bartlesville, OK, daughter Laura Fielder (Brad) of Norman, OK, and daughter Anne Birkett (Alex Siegel) of Seattle, WA. She is also survived by her beloved grandchildren, Edwin Noble Siegel (Teddy), Thomas Lowell Fielder (Tommy), Marjorie Mae Siegel (Maggie), and a host of dear friends.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that Mary be remembered with contributions to Bartlesville Public Schools Foundation, <https://bpsfoundation.org/donate/>, or to CONCERN, <https://concerncares.com/give-help>.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JAN **10**. 11:00 AM (CT)

First Presbyterian Church
505 S.E. Dewey
Bartlesville, OK 74003

Tribute Wall

RK

“Mrs. Birkett was an absolute treasure I was so blessed to know in my formative years. Ages ago, I was a student of Kane Elementary. I tell people to this day one of my first best friends was a librarian. We shared a love of reading and I was able to spend a quiet recess time in her company. When my family moved before 5th grade, my parting gift to her was a book I wrote. I cannot remember the contents but I remember her often. My thoughts are with the family, she was a beautiful, beloved soul.



Racheal “Mikki” Kendall - June 04 at 08:52 PM

LS

“1 file added to the tribute wall



Lyle Seitter - February 06 at 11:39 PM

LS

High School Jug and Bottle Band

Lyle Seitter - February 06 at 11:41 PM

LF

Lyle! What a treasure this is! Thank you so much for posting! This is Mary's older daughter, Laura. I've heard of you and this band my whole life but I have never seen a photo of it. How special.

Laura Fielder - May 22 at 08:52 PM

LS

Laura, I'm the jug player next to Mary. She loved music and playing in the band... also high school band (oboe). Great piano player, she was. I played tuba and she was my accompaniment for many solo contests. Great memories! Lyle

Lyle Seitter - July 28 at 03:27 PM

RS

“ Just now learning of the Birkett's family loss of sweet Mary. She was a tiny package of dynamite with so much energy and passion. To know her was to love her. Keeping you all in our thoughts and prayers! Retta Seger

Retta Seger - January 14 at 07:09 PM

LF

“ Love, Your P.E.O. Sisters in Chapter FT purchased the Basket Full of Wishes for the family of Mary Rose Birkett.



Love, Your P.E.O. Sisters in Chapter FT - January 09 at 02:00 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Mary Rose Birkett.



January 09 at 08:42 AM

SF

“ Scott and the Merrill family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mary Rose Birkett.

Scott and the Merrill family - January 09 at 08:42 AM

MS

“ I was sad to learn of Mary's passing. Lifting prayers for God's Comfort, Peace, and Strength. Mary was a special woman, friend, educator. . . I am thankful to have known her and for all the special memories of various groups we both were active in together in Bartlesville. Marsha Sauter

Marsha Sauter - January 08 at 04:10 PM

KG

“ I am so sorry to hear of this. My mom, Mary Nunneley, just loved her! I am praying for all of you ❤️

Kathleen Godwin - January 08 at 10:50 AM