



## Betty Jane Bennett

January 21, 1922 - February 2, 2023

Betty Jane Mereness Bennett was born to Nellie and Mason Mereness in Townsend, Montana on January 21, 1922. She was raised and educated in Helena, graduating from Helena High School with honors in 1940. She passed peacefully at her home surrounded by her family on Thursday, February 2, 2023, shortly after celebrating her 101st birthday.

In Helena, she worked for Western Union Telegraph in her teens, followed by the Federal Reserve Bank and the Union Bank. She married Fred John Bennett on December 28, 1946, in the second ever Baha'i Marriage ceremony in the State of Montana. They lived in Bozeman while Fred attended Montana State University. Betty worked for the Production and Marketing Association Office of the US Government. In 1950, they moved to Butte where Fred was employed as a teacher with the Butte School District and she worked briefly for Otis Elevator Co. After staying at home with their three daughters in their early years, she worked as a secretary in the Petroleum Department at Montana Tech for 15 years until her retirement in 1984. She grew to love Butte, treasured her lifelong friendships, and considered it home.

Betty became a member of the Baha'i Faith in Helena in 1937 and was elected as secretary of the Helena and Butte communities and served for over 50 years. She also assisted on a State Baha'i Teaching Committee for over 25 years where most of the time she served as secretary. Several times she was

elected to be the State Delegate to the National Baha'i Convention in Wilmette, Illinois. During her retirement years, she completed a Compilation on the History of the Baha'is of Montana. She traveled to seven Native American reservations representing the Baha'is, to the 1944 dedication of the Baha'i House of Worship in Wilmette, Illinois, the 1972 dedication of the House of Worship in New Delhi, India, and the 1992 second Baha'i World Congress in New York City, as well as a multitude of regional, national and international Baha'i Summer Schools and conferences. She was able to travel four times to the International Baha'i Center in Haifa, Israel, three times as a Pilgrim and once as a visitor. One of her favorite Baha'i quotes was "The earth is one country and mankind its citizens."

Betty and Fred loved camping, getting wood for their stove and traveled to most states in the US including Alaska and Hawaii. She also traveled to England, Wales, Germany and Malaysia. Betty was a superb hostess and their home was a haven of hospitality for friends and family. As a secretary at Montana Tech, she befriended and welcomed many international students to dinner at their table. Her community service included President of the Emerson PTA, promoting a bond issue which built the current Emerson Elementary school. She instructed Civil Defense during the Cold War years. She was an avid reader in her later years. After her husband's passing, she volunteered as a literacy coach.

She and Fred celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary before his passing in 2007. Betty is survived by her three daughters, Pam (Gary) Wolfe of Lander, Wyoming, Debbie (Dave) Angelly of Bozeman, Dawn (Bruce) Bowman of Pocatello, Idaho, and brother Richard (Rigmor) Mereness of Billings, in addition to 7 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren, 2 nieces and 1 nephew, and her treasured and very dear friend Diana DeWitt. She was preceded in death by her parents, a sister and her husband.

The family would like to extend their gratitude to her helpful neighbors, Judy & Kevin Getz and Mary Barbachano. Also great appreciation to Debbie Matule who groomed her lawn and sidewalks year round and Jenn Sullivan-Bradley who knew exactly how to quaff her hair. Highlands Hospice was gracious, professional, gentle and so helpful as we eased our mother out of this world. We also appreciate the love imparted by Mom's many dear Baha'i friends who took the time to stay in touch with her, share prayers and recognize the gift of her deep wisdom and experience.

A Baha'i funeral service will be conducted at Wayrynen-Richard's Funeral Home, 1800 Florence Ave, Butte, MT 59701, on Tuesday afternoon at 1 o'clock. Interment will follow in Mountain View Cemetery.

To honor Betty, please consider a donation to the Butte Food Bank ([mfbn.org](http://mfbn.org)) or Butte Women's Shelter ([WomenShelters.org](http://WomenShelters.org)).

# Cemetery Details

## Mountain View Cemetery

3910 Harrison Avenue  
Butte, MT 59701

# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

FEB 7. 1:00 PM (MT)

Wayrynen-Richards Funeral Home  
1800 Florence Ave  
Butte, MT 59701  
(406) 723-3221  
<https://wayrynen-richards.com/>

# Tribute Wall

JD

“ No matter where I lived or how long I had been away I always would go to Fred and Betty's and it was like I had never left and felt like when I was a child again, like being home. And I will ALWAYS remember the 1st and only lemon tree I had ever seen (especially in Montana) Betty grew in the front room. And how wonderful her Lemon meringue pies were.

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**Jamalea Diller** - February 12, 2023 at 11:54 AM

HO

“ Betty was such a delight in our lives. She was always investigating and searching for more depth in her understanding of life and the Baha'i faith. She was a gift and blessing to touch so many lives in such a powerful way.

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**Helen O'Jack** - February 08, 2023 at 10:16 AM

JE

“ I was honored to call her my grandma. I will miss her hugs and kisses. This was when we met up in NYC. The most fashionable and artsy grandma I ever had.



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**Jei** - February 07, 2023 at 09:56 PM

KB

“ There are so many wonderful memories of Betty in our hearts. We were so very blessed to be included in the Baha’i celebrations at the Wolfe home. Betty was always so fun. Many hours were spent visiting, cooking, playing cards and belly laughing. My children have fond memories of times with Betty because of her love of children. Our lives were enriched with her love. Betty you are in our hearts always.

*Kelly, Lonell, Dietric, and Hans*

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**Kelly Bembry-Hennings** - February 07, 2023 at 03:19 PM

DV

“ I am sorry to hear of Betty’s passing but happy she will be with Fred again. I call myself lucky growing up in Montana with my extra Grandparents Betty and Fred. Some of my best memories were camping and going to Baha’i Summer School with both of them. I can’t remember ever going to a Bahai event without them being present. When I think of Betty I only think of her smile and how happy she always seemed to be. Both Betty and Fred were a warm, caring and loving couple who were always welcoming to all who knew them. They will both be greatly missed.

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**David Vaughn** - February 07, 2023 at 01:22 PM

PL

“ Beautiful photo of Betty and her brother Richard at a celebration of friends event in Aug 2017.



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**Pamela Laursen** - February 07, 2023 at 12:20 PM

TB

“ I am offering prayers for Betty and your entire family as she transitions to the Abha Kingdom. I treasure many sweet childhood memories of times spent in the Bennett home. The love that Betty and Fred showered upon all of us who crossed paths with them is a reflection of their generous, caring souls. Sending you all love.  
~Tanya Bemis

Tanya Bemis - February 06, 2023 at 01:01 PM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Betty Jane Bennett.



February 05, 2023 at 09:09 PM

MW

“ Betty was always a presence at Summer School, Unit Conventions and other meetings. So welcoming and joyful. She is now lighting up the Abha Kingdom.

Marge Wilson - February 05, 2023 at 06:52 PM

JL

“ Jim and Nancy Lee purchased the Country Basket et Blooms for the family of Betty Jane Bennett.



Jim and Nancy Lee - February 05, 2023 at 02:06 PM

HG

“ *Some of my favorite childhood memories were attending feast at the Bennett's house. Prayers for you and all of your family.*

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**Howard Galinkin** - February 04, 2023 at 07:57 PM

CG

“ *Charlene Angelly & Dayne Grenfell purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Betty Jane Bennett.*



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**Charlene Angelly & Dayne Grenfell** - February 04, 2023 at 05:15 PM

JB

“ Betty and Fred were our Montana Grandparents. Most of my memories of childhood in MT included them, Betty’s love for everyone, her welcoming spirit, the beautiful cloud of white hair that crowned her head and Fred’s big smile and humor. The Vaughn kids were so excited every time we headed to Butte to stay with the Bennetts, their home provided love and warmth and a spiritual place of rest. Thanksgivings were pretty awesome as family and friends gathered, the kids packed in with sleeping bags, snowball fights, and adventure, Betty and Fred wrangled us all in their home. Every major Bahá’í Gathering in Montana, the Bennetts were part of the spiritual center of the community, their generosity and love for everyone stayed with us and guided us, even years after we moved out of state. In 1986, Betty and Fred travelled to the Dedication of the Bahá’í House of Worship in New Delhi. I was a teen about to begin my year of service in Botswana, Africa and we all met by accident on the same flight to India. It was a blessing to have their love and support in the first stage of my journey, which was both exciting and scary. They shared prayers and well-wishes and encouragement and essentially launched me into my first big adventure. I am so grateful for their continued friendship and love they shared with our parents over the years, Dad and Mom adored Betty and Fred and all their children and grandchildren and stayed connected throughout their lives. Sending prayers and love for the beautiful generations of Bennetts and Mereness families and for all the people whose lives they touched. Sending special prayers for Betty, reunited with Fred in the spiritual kingdom! - Julie Vaughn Borges

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**Julie Vaughn Borges** - February 04, 2023 at 03:28 PM



“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



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**Wayrynen-Richards Funeral Home** - February 04, 2023 at 11:13 AM