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For immediate release

Betty Jo Grant, wife of Ouachita President Emeritus Daniel Grant, remembered for life of service

By Trennis Henderson

September 8, 2019

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5206

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Betty Jo Grant, who served 18 years as First Lady of Ouachita Baptist University, passed away on Saturday, Sept. 7, at age 92. She is survived by her husband of 72 years, Dr. Daniel R. Grant, Sr., President Emeritus of Ouachita.

In honor of her service to Ouachita, Mrs. Grant was recognized with the Distinguished Alumnus Award and the Purple & Gold Heart Award. Additionally, the Daniel and Betty Jo Grant Center for International Education was named in the Grants' honor. The American Mothers, Inc., Arkansas Association named her Arkansas Mother of the Year in 2002.

"Mrs. Grant loved being a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, and I couldn't have asked for a more affirming and generous mother-in-law," said Phil Hardin, Ouachita's assistant to the president for administration emeritus. "She held the family close through faithful communication, wonderful holiday traditions and summer family reunions. She and Dr. Grant created wonderful memories for their extended family.

"She also relished her role as Ouachita's First Lady," he added. "For 18 years, heaven only knows how many Ouachita students, prospective students, alumni, trustees, ministers, missionaries, donors and other guests she welcomed and fed, all in the days before Ouachita had a catering service. She helped make the Ouachita family something very special."

Ouachita President Ben Sells noted that Mrs. Grant "warmly welcomed our family to Ouachita and always was encouraging to us in our interactions. Her legacy as a gracious hostess and university ambassador will be remembered by generations of Ouachita students."

Describing her as "an exemplary Ouachitonian," Dr. Sells recalled, "Over the years, she frequently attended Ouachita football games and she and Dr. Grant always were vocal in rooting for the Tigers. Her deep love of Ouachita was evident throughout her life."

Betty Jo Oliver Grant was born Aug. 2, 1927, in St. Joseph, La., the daughter of Victor LeRoy Oliver and Katsie Lord Oliver. She spent her childhood in Wilmot, Ark.; attended Henderson State Teachers College (now Henderson State University); and graduated from Ouachita Baptist College (now University) in 1947 at age 19.

In 1948, Dr. and Mrs. Grant moved to Nashville, Tenn., where he served on the faculty of Vanderbilt University for more than 21 years. Mrs. Grant was active for many years in missions support groups and traveled with her husband to meetings of the Baptist World Alliance. She also taught English language classes while in Bangkok, Thailand, during her husband's yearlong teaching exchange assignment.

The Grants moved to Arkadelphia in 1970 when Dr. Grant was elected president of Ouachita. Mrs. Grant, an active member of First Baptist Church of Arkadelphia, sang in the sanctuary choir and was a leader in women's and missions support ministries.

Mrs. Grant assisted her husband in the development of what is now the Consortium for Global Education (CGE). Relationships they developed during extensive travels for Ouachita and the Baptist World Alliance

contributed to the creation of the international consortium of more than 50 Baptist colleges and schools. In retirement, the Grants served for 10 years as CGE's volunteer leaders.

In addition to her husband, she is survived by two daughters, Carolyn (and Bill) Walton of The Villages, Fla., and Shirley (and Phil) Hardin, of Arkadelphia; and by one son, Daniel Ross (and Liz) Grant, Jr. of Wiley, Texas.

She also is survived by five grandchildren, Tad (and Monica) Hardin, Allison (and Dan) Hyll, Jon (and Katie) Hardin, Gary (and Katherine) Grant and Gina (and Zach) Scheer; and 11 great-grandchildren, Zachary, Isaac, Charlie and Leo Hardin; Keller and Kaleb Hyll; Elliott, Julianne and Mason Grant; and Jordan and Adam Scheer.

She was predeceased by her parents; her brother, Victor Lord Oliver; and her sister, Lenore Oliver Smith.

A memorial service for Mrs. Grant and a family visitation will be held on Saturday, Sept. 28, at First Baptist Church of Arkadelphia.

Memorial gifts may be made to the Daniel and Betty Jo Grant Center for International Education, in care of the Office of Development, Ouachita Baptist University, OBU Box 3754, Arkadelphia AR 71998, or to the Endowment Fund of First Baptist Church, 623 W. Pine Street, Arkadelphia AR 71923.

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