



## Betty Jo McElderry

January 19, 1939 - July 26, 2019

Betty McElderry passed away on July 26, 2019. She was loved by many and impacted the lives of many young women within the Oklahoma Girls State. While her life has come to an end, her legacy will live within each and every person that knew her. Born January 19, 1939, Betty Jo Suchy was the child of Michael and Virgie (Franks) Suchy. She was raised in Norman and attended Norman Public Schools. She married her true love and life partner, Neil William "Bill" McElderry Jr. They made their home in Purcell where they raised two sons, Neil III and Mike. Throughout her life, Betty had a distinguished record of activism and public service. She was actively involved in the field of Education. She attended the University of Oklahoma, later graduating with a B.A. in 1961 and M.A. in 1964, returning for her doctorate in 1981. Betty was a former teacher and taught at Jr. high and high school level as well as at the University of Oklahoma.

She served in the administrations of six governors. Her state boards and commissions included: The State Advisory Committee on Aging, Oklahoma Economic Development Council, State Health Coordinating Council, the State Library Board, the National Education Association, the Oklahoma State Election Board, the Governor's Task Force on County Government Reform, and the State Advisory Council on Library Services. The Oklahoma Women's Hall of Fame was established when she was chairman of Governor Nigh's Commission on the Status of Women and she also was a member of Governor Walter's Commission. American Legion Auxiliary Past Department

President Betty McElderry was a member of the Oklahoma Girls State staff since 1975 and served as Director for 19 years. Betty was a former teacher and a charter member and past president of the Purcell Public School Foundation. She also served on the Nigh Institute Scholarship Committee. Betty was particularly proud of the twelve years she was Chairman of the State Election Board. During that time Oklahoma became the first in the nation to computerize the election system and since then, no election has ever been overturned.

She was a member of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and the League of Women Voters (LWV) and served on the state and national boards of each organization. She testified before the U.S. Senate Labor Committee on women's pension rights when she was state president of AAUW. She directed a Ford Foundation grant for LWV on education finance reform which contributed to the passage of the landmark education Bill 1017. In 1981, she was named an Outstanding Democratic Woman. Democratic party politics was her true passion where she was active for 5 decades beginning in the 1970's as a precinct, county and district officer before being elected for 4 terms as State Vice Chair and one term as Chairman of the Oklahoma Democratic Party. She was elected to 5 terms as Oklahoma Democratic National Committeewoman. She was a member of the League of Women Voters, the Oklahoma Federation of Democratic Women and the State Democratic Executive Committee since 1979.

She has been a delegate to three White House Conferences and a delegate to 10 Democratic National Conventions for the last 36 years and was a Presidential Elector for the 1996, 2004 and 2016 elections. She campaigned for many democratic candidates but her most rewarding was leading Governor George Nigh's election in 13 of 77 Oklahoma Counties. In 1997, Betty was honored by the Oklahoma Democratic Party with the Carl Albert Award. She represented the United States on official visits to Greece and Taiwan to teach about our political party system. Betty was honored by Campaign and Elections magazine as one of 74 outstanding women who

have positively changed America. The award was given to celebrate the 74th anniversary of the 19th amendment to the Constitution giving women the right to vote. Betty was a longtime member of the Trinity United Methodist Church and served in various capacities throughout the years. She was a loving wife, mother, mother in law, grandmother, educator, cancer survivor and a true "yellow dog democrat".

Betty is preceded in death by her beloved husband Neil and resided in Purcell until the Lord called her home. Her boys, Neil III and wife Melissa and Mike, all live in Purcell, and she and Neil were the grandparents to twin grandsons, Conner and Caleb and their granddaughter, Taylor.

The McElderry Family would like to thank everyone from the Oklahoma Democrat Party, Oklahoma Girls State staff, Dr. Rick Schmidt, Wilson-Little Funeral Home and everyone who has shown support during this time. She will be dearly missed!

Funeral Services are scheduled for 11:00 A.M. Saturday, August 3, 2019, at the Wilson-Little Funeral Home Chapel. Interment will be at Hillside Cemetery in Purcell. Viewing hours will be Monday and Tuesday, 8:00 A.M. - 8:00 P.M. at Wilson-Little Funeral Home.