



Irene Crawford Biggs

August 16, 1928 - February 24, 2024

Irene Biggs, age 95, passed away Saturday, February 24, 2024. A celebration of life will be held at Harrod Brothers Funeral Home on Friday, March 15, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. with Dr. David K. Hinson officiating. A gathering of family and friends will be held at Harrod Brothers Funeral Home from 12:00 p.m. until 2:00 p.m. on Friday, March 15, 2024. Interment will be at Camp Nelson National Cemetery on Monday, March 18, 2024, at 1:30 p.m.

Irene, the youngest of five children, was born in the early morning hours of a hot August day in 1928, in a log cabin in Smithland, Kentucky. Irene was mischievous and curious, often asking questions to the point of exasperating her parents and older siblings. She loved helping her mother plant flowers and bake cakes and cookies. While she enjoyed the bounty of the family's vegetable garden, Irene hated canning time as her small hands easily fit into the canning jars, so she was tasked with washing them all. Irene loved school and enjoyed reading and writing, particularly poetry (with one published poem "The Old Country Store" to her credit). In fifth grade, the class was told to write their autobiography to read aloud to the class. Irene went home and asked her older sister, Opal (who also loved to write) what she should put in her autobiography. Opal explained what she should include and when it was finished, said Irene had done a really good job. The following day, many of the students, particularly the boys, merely wrote two or three sentences like "I was born on" and "I live in Smithland and I like baseball." Irene's biography was a

page and a half and received an A+.

Irene's father was co-owner of the local electric plant which provided power to homes in Smithland. Electric power was provided for approximately twelve to fourteen hours each day, seven days a week. Those living outside the city limits did not have electricity and relied upon lamps and candles to light their homes. The Crawfords were among some of the first families in Smithland to have electric lights on the Christmas tree. Their dad came home with a single strand of lights and as the girls were tasked with decorating the tree, Irene's eldest sister, Dulcinia ("Del"), decided the lights needed to be put at the bottom of the tree facing the window. She then strategically placed the window shade so that from the outside, you could only see the lighted portion of the tree. After the tree was lit, the front room began to fill up with kids. Mrs. Crawford asked Irene what was going on and Irene said Del was going out and inviting all the kids into to see how the lights worked on the tree. This wasn't the first, nor the last, time that little Irene would tell what her older siblings were up to.

Streets in Smithland were dirt and when the workers came through to begin paving, little Irene would go out to watch. Mrs. Crawford came out to see what Irene was up to and saw how hot the work was. She told the men when they took their lunch break to come to her porch and she would have something cold for them to drink. While the men ate and drank, Mrs. Crawford would sit and chat with them. Irene would then sing for them. Every day, the men would come to the porch for lunch, conversation, and a song or two from Irene. The men began giving Irene pennies after she would sing. Irene thought they were doing so because they liked her singing but her sister, Del, said they were paying her to stop.

Living a few doors down from the Livingston County Courthouse, Irene and her family had a ring side seat to a piece of Kentucky history. In 1935, "Willie"

DeBoe and his accomplice went on a crime spree prompting people to actually lock their doors and be wary of any new faces. The pair were arrested in Tennessee and extradited back to Kentucky. Hundreds of people attended the trial in July 1934, and, at one point, so many people were standing on the wooden staircase, it developed a crack. Irene and two of her older sisters tried to sneak down to the courthouse to hear part of the proceedings, but while some parents used the trial as a teaching moment, Irene's parents said that was no place for young girls. DeBoe was found guilty on all charges, including rape. A scaffold was erected in the yard of the jail and by the time set for the execution, approximately 1,500 people had gathered, including the two eldest Crawford girls. Irene got caught as she tried to sneak away and told on her older sisters.

Smithland sits on a bluff at the confluence of the Ohio and Cumberland rivers. In 1937, Irene and her family watched the rivers begin to rise and began talking of what to do if they needed to evacuate. The flood came faster than anticipated as they went to bed around nine and before midnight, Mr. Crawford ran into the house yelling for everyone to get dressed and in the wagon. Flood waters had already reached their back yard. Everyone evacuated to the high school which sat on a hill overlooking Smithland. By morning, the entirety of downtown was under water and Irene and her siblings watched as an entire house floated downstream with a dog sitting on the roof. When the waters eventually receded, it took the families weeks to clean up. Irene often said the only good thing to come out of it was the loss of the straw mattresses which were replaced by feather beds.

Irene got a guitar and taught herself how to play. She would play and sing for her infant niece and nephew and with her best friend, Dorinda. She also loved to play games and would hang around her elder sisters and their boyfriends when they were playing card games. Sometimes the boys would give her a

nickel to go away and leave them alone; however, if Del or Opal were unable to play, Irene would sit in and was quite a wicked Rook player, a game she enjoyed well into her adult years playing as partners with her husband Noel ("Mike"). Irene and Noel met on a blind double date (albeit with other people) and soon began their own courtship. They took long rides on Noel's Harley around the countryside and often spoke about the day that everywhere they stopped to get a drink, the wells had 'alum' water which is an acquired taste and causes your mouth to pucker. Noel laughingly said it made it easier to sneak a kiss. Irene and Noel met in 1950, married in 1953 and were together for sixty-seven years before Noel went to be with the Lord in 2020.

Irene loved her family, a good joke, poetry, music and cooking and baking. She was a huge fan of Dolly Parton and jokingly said she too had a coat of many colors, referring to her favorite winter coat which had big blocks of different colors. She will be remembered by everyone who was lucky enough to have tasted her made from scratch German Chocolate Cake and Chocolate Pie.

She is survived by her daughter, Tamela Biggs; nieces, Kay O'Bryan, Jane Johnson and Gail Haire; and, great-niece Paula Blades. She was also blessed with many cousins and friends.

She was preceded in death by her husband Noel Biggs; parents, James L. and Ada Mitchell Crawford; sisters, Dulcinia Gregory, Opal Fuller and Dorothy Metcalf; brother, James L. Crawford, Jr; and nephew, Danny Fuller.

In lieu of flowers, expressions of sympathy may be made to Bluegrass Hospice Care/Bluegrass Care Navigators.

Arrangements are under the direction of Harrod Brothers Funeral Home & Crematory.

Previous Events

Gathering of Family and Friends

MAR 15. 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Harrod Brothers Funeral Home
312 Washington Street
Frankfort, KY 40601
(502) 227-4526
hbfh@harrodbrothers.com
<https://www.harrodbrothers.com>

Celebration of Life

MAR 15. 2:00 PM (ET)

Harrod Brothers Funeral Home
312 Washington Street
Frankfort, KY 40601
(502) 227-4526
hbfh@harrodbrothers.com
<https://www.harrodbrothers.com>

Interment

MAR 18. 1:30 PM (ET)

Camp Nelson National Cemetery
6980 Danville Road
Nicholasville, KY 40356

Tribute Wall

KD

“ Irene and her sisters were a barrel of fun. What a well written obituary! (Thanks Tamela) She was a joy to talk to and will be greatly missed. Her passing was another loss from a great generation of Crawfords. I'm sure she's having the time of her life, celebrating with Mike. God bless you Tamela. Yours in our thoughts and prayers. So sorry I couldn't be there today.

Sincerely
Kenny Downs

Kenneth Downs - March 15, 2024 at 03:52 PM



“ 54 files added to the album Life Tributes



Harrod Brothers Funeral Home - March 11, 2024 at 10:43 AM