

https://www.fbherald.com/obituaries/billie-wendt/article_c16c31f9-ca5f-5eaf-99a2-ded2c33248b1.html

Billie Wendt

Nov 2, 2020



Friends, family and associates mourned the passing of Fort Bend County philanthropist and community leader Billie Wendt on Monday, October 26, 2020. She was 97.

Wendt, the wife of the late Jack Wendt, was recalled for generously giving of her time and money to worthwhile charities, organizations, and institutions throughout Fort Bend County. "Billie was the most gracious matriarch of old Richmond," recalled friend Sue Mitchell. "Our community is better for having her service and leadership, she was influential in just about every organization related to

church, history, government, hospital, farming and ranching. There was never an unkind word from her or about her. She was truly a Richmond icon and she will be remembered for her love of Richmond, Ft. Bend County and its history.”

Billie Amilee Harris Wendt was a fourth generation Texan, was born in Houston and spent her childhood in Fulshear, Texas. She was the third child of Judge Hunter Pinkney Harris and Willie Amilee McKeithan Harris. Billie’s education started in a one teacher schoolhouse. She attended Richmond High School, where she graduated as valedictorian of her class in 1940.

Her college of choice was Southern Methodist University where she attended from 1940 through 1942. At SMU she pledged Tri Delta Sorority and remained active, sponsoring young women in Ft. Bend who were attending rush week in college. Billie was named most popular, and a homecoming duchess her freshman year, and voted a beauty her sophomore year. With the outbreak of WWII, she moved to Houston to live with her sister, whose husband was serving in the armed forces. In 1944, Billie received a bachelor’s degree from the University of Houston. She taught high school English in Katy and Richmond for three years upon graduation.

In December 1947, she married her high school sweetheart, Jack Wendt, who was a lifelong resident of Richmond. They had four daughters and during their early family life, Billie became involved in parenting activities, such as the PTA, parent clubs for tennis and the church junior choir. Volunteering started for Billie with youth programs with the Fort Bend County Fair, Calvary school board and chairing a major fund raiser for the Richmond State School 10th anniversary.

Once the children were in college, Billie was appointed to the Fort Bend County Historical Commission. This started her lifelong interest of Fort Bend history and her devotion to the Fort Bend Historical Museum Association. She served on the committee that established the museum in 1967 and continued to serve on the board of trustees of the museum association where she held every officer position. During her tenure as the first woman president, the museum was remodeled, and two more buildings added to the campus. Billie co-created the first of an ongoing yearly fundraiser for the association: The Lone Star Stomp. Eventually the Stomp event moved to the George Ranch after a working relationship was created with the George Foundation in Fort Bend. She still served as Museum Association Secretary and as an Executive Committee member until Jack’s passing in 2013. After the formation of the Museum Association Docents in 1976, Billie became an active volunteer and in 1986 she held the office of President.

She was a loyal and devoted member of St. John's United Methodist Church in Richmond where she volunteered to teach Bible school and Sunday school well into her 80s. Taking part in United Methodist Women was a joy and she was honored to be named President for two terms. As time went on, her calling led more to administrative responsibilities, serving as chairman of Staff-Parish Relations Committee for three years, Chair of the Administrative Board for two years (she has been the first and only woman to hold this position). This was followed by appointment to be Lay delegate to the Annual Conference held every May plus ex-officio membership on every major committee. The Wendt's headed a financial fund-raising committee to renovate the existing structures, add land to the church and build an activity building. The board of the church decided the building would be named Wendt Hall and Jack dedicated the building to his mother Jackie Wendt and his wife, Billie. Her church and her God have always been very important to her. Billie is as much a part of St. John's as the stained-glass windows.

Our mother continued community service by working on the United Way Advisory Board of Fort Bend County and De Pelchin Children's Center where she served on their building committee for the residential treatment hospital and the organization's merger with Youth Opportunities Unlimited. Billie also enjoyed being a member of the Richmond Garden Club, the Rosenberg Women's Book Club and The Downton Abby Supper Club.

In 1988, she was the first and only woman appointed to serve as a life member on the Polly Ryon Hospital Board of Trustees since Mrs. A. P. George in 1950. Wendt was instrumental in helping OakBend Medical Center complete its fourth floor at its Jackson Street hospital in 2016. In return for her and her late husband's generous donations and longtime service to the hospital, OakBend named the floor The Jack and Billie Wendt Acute Care for the Elderly Unit. "We have lost a beloved Richmond citizen whose kindness and generosity touched so many of us over the years," said Joe Freudenberger, OakBend CEO. "Billie and her late husband Jack were good people. They will be missed."



She was a founding member of the beautiful and historic Fulshear Cemetery when it was incorporated in 1980. In recent years, she has been honored by the American Heart Association of West Fort Bend, the YMCA of Richmond, and the Museum Association. In 2000, Billie was the first woman to be honored by the Masonic Lodge of Richmond. In 2013, OakBend Hospital named Billie as one of the women who was a "Star of Fort Bend."

Billie and Jack made life friendships with their neighbors, the rice farming families, plus through the museum and the church. Bridge was a game Billie loved. She was active in two groups and would have bridge house parties at the family ranch, The Blue Jay, for many years. Billie loved learning, the museum docent and garden club trips were a way to be with friends that shared common interests. The trips covered cities in both the US, Canada and Nova Scotia.

Travel was a passion with the Wendt's and especially for Billie. She went to every country in Europe, including many trips to Italy and two to Israel with Dr. Charles Allen.

Entertaining was another way the Wendt's gave back to the community. A St. John's Sunrise Easter Service was held on the family's front lawn for several years. Billie loved to have family weddings at home or work on the beading of the dress, host committee meetings and bridge luncheons. The lake houses at the farm were a favorite place for parties that were auctioned off to benefit the museum. Our mother took pride in making sure that the best food and flowers were part of every event.

Billie was preceded in death by her parents, her sister Evalyn Harris Geizendanner, brother Dr. Hunter Pinckney Harris, and husband, B. Jack Wendt. She is survived by daughter, Evalyn Wendt Moore and husband, Hal Ben Grady; daughter, Amilee Wendt; daughter, Jackie Wendt Martin and husband Jay; daughter Laurel Wendt and husband, Mike Phillips. Grandchildren: Hope Bradberry and husband, John; Harris Lamkin; Dr. Jaclyn Wedemeyer and husband, Stephen; Jennifer Pollock and husband,

Trace; Julia Hughes and husband, Heath. Great-grandchildren Jake Bradberry; Jordan and Jack Lamkin; Briggs, Hattie and Milly Wedemeyer; Hayden and Hunter Hughes. Great-Great-grandchild Kennedy Bradberry.

“Our mother’s participation in community endeavors continued and it was her hope that what time she spent here has made a difference,” her daughters said. “Her work would never have been a reality without the whole-hearted, unselfish support of her husband, Jack. ”Our mother had the ability to make everyone feel welcome, and this is a testament to the love she exemplified. “

The interment will be held at Morton Cemetery for the immediate family. There will be a Celebration of Life at a future date, notices will be posted in the Houston Chronicle and The Ft. Bend Herald. The family is asking that in lieu of flowers a donation may be made in Billie’s name to St. John’s United Methodist Church, Richmond or to the Ft. Bend County Historical Museum.

Condolence messages may be written for the Wendt family at www.garmanycarden.com.

Services are under the direction of Garmany & Carden Funeral Directors, 1201 Fourth Street, Rosenberg, TX 77471 (281)342-4671.