



## Dr. Barbara S. Penelton

April 8, 1937 - March 18, 2013

Dr. Barbara S. Penelton, 75, of Peoria, IL passed away at 11:55 PM on Monday, March 18, 2013 at OSF St. Francis Medical Center.

Barbara's natural gift was her tireless ability to give to others. What she gave depended on the person and the situation, but it always seemed right for the moment. Her gift wasn't necessarily monetary or material, it was the ability to understand another person's needs and to resource within herself to fulfill that need with an appropriate response. She listened, volunteered, found information, was a best friend / trusted colleague / confidant. Her close friends and her children grew to understand that the other bedrooms in her home would rarely be unoccupied, even after her children reached adulthood, because Barbara embraced and opened her home to others. If a situation became tense or uneasy, Barbara had an uncanny ability to recall a humorous or even ridiculous anecdote to relieve the tension.

Barbara loved and enjoyed her entire family. Her extended family, like many others, encompasses a breadth of surnames including Spencers, Shores, Peneltons, Smiths, and more. But the culture of her family life also serves as foundation to Barbara's nature of giving and sharing. The motto "Those who claim heritage through affirmation or affiliation, through conception or consent..." illustrates who you might encounter at her Thanksgiving table. In her family, it never mattered if you were a half, full, or step sibling, a first or a

fifteenth cousin, or a current or former spouse---it just never mattered. She was Mommy, Bam, Auntie Barbara, Cousin Barbara, Barb, and Barbara Jeanne. She expressed love fully in these roles and her nieces, nephews, and Godchildren were loved and embraced as her children and grandchildren.

Barbara was born in Chicago on April 8, 1937 to Ruth and George Spencer. She received her early education in Chicago Public Schools and realized at an early age that she wanted to become a teacher. She earned a BS and an MS in education in 1958 and 1961, respectfully, from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. In 1957 while studying at U of I, she met and married Frank Smith, a fellow Chicagoan who was then an art student at the university. To that union were born 2 daughters Kim and Lisa. They divorced in 1965. In 1966, she met Peoria journalist Richard Penelton. They married in 1968 and Penelton adopted and raised their girls, until his untimely death in 1972.

Professionally, she taught for Chicago Public Schools until 1966 (Harvard and McCosh). In 1966, she moved to Peoria, IL, after accepting a position as director of education for the Peoria Tri-County Urban League. In 1969, Penelton became the first African American female faculty member at Bradley University, also in Peoria, where she taught and served as chair of the university's Department of Teacher Education in the College of Education and Health Sciences.

She is survived by her father George Spencer Sr, brother George Spencer Jr., 2 daughters Lisa Penelton and Kim (husband Frank) Campbell of Chicago, and 2 grandchildren Franklin and Julian Campbell. Additionally, Barbara is survived by 4 of her other children: Toby Smith of Los Angeles, CA, Sheri Mathis of South Holland, IL, Dominique Brown of Peoria, IL, and George Lyon Spencer of Houston, TX; 8 other grandchildren Nishay Brown, Daejunique Brown, Jordan Carter, Nathan Carter, Sydney Mathis, Joseph Mathis, Geordan Spencer, Skye Spencer; 1 Goddaughter Karlyn Miller Singleton of

Detroit, MI; 1 God granddaughter Tamara Camille Butler of Peoria, IL; and a host of other much-beloved children, family members, book club sisters, sorors, and friends.

Funeral services will be held at 4 pm on Sunday, March 24, 2013 at New Cornerstone Baptist Church, 3609 W. Harmon Highway, Peoria , IL with a visitation two hours prior beginning at 2 pm. Dr. Mark A. McConnell, Pastor, will officiate. A visitation will also be held in Barbara's hometown of Chicago on Monday, March 25, 2013 from 11 am to 2 pm at Brookins Funeral Home 9315 South Ashland Avenue, Chicago, IL 60620. Barbara will be entombed at Lincoln Cemetery and Mausoleum in Alsip, Illinois. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Barbara S. Penelton Scholarship Fund at Bradley University, the Peoria Tri-County Urban League or to New Cornerstone Baptist Church. Simons Mortuary has been entrusted with arrangements. Online condolences may be made at the [simonsmortuary.com](http://simonsmortuary.com) website.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

MAR **24.** 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

New Cornerstone Baptist Church  
3609 West Harmon Highway  
Peoria, IL 61604

## Funeral Service

MAR **24.** 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM (CT)

New Cornerstone Baptist Church  
3609 West Harmon Highway  
Peoria, IL 61604

## Visitation

MAR **25.** 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Brookins Funeral Home  
9315 S Ashland Ave  
Chicago, IL 60620

# Tribute Wall



“ *Simons Mortuary created a Tribute Video in memory of Dr. Barbara S. Penelton*



---

**Simons Mortuary** - March 18, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ *Dr. Barbara S. Penelton*

---

January 29, 2023 at 06:10 AM



“ *Dr. Barbara S. Penelton*

---

January 29, 2023 at 03:12 AM



“ *Angell Campbell lit a candle in memory of Dr. Barbara S. Penelton*



---

**Angell Campbell** - April 26, 2016 at 08:51 PM

SP

“ *Sherry Prewitt lit a candle in memory of Dr. Barbara S. Penelton*



---

**Sherry Prewitt** - June 16, 2014 at 04:25 AM

JW

“ *To the Spencer & Penelton families, I was saddened to hear about Barbara, I met Barbara in 1955 & she introduced me to her mother after I brought her home from a VFP dance. My wife (on her way back to Memphis in 1956) met her on a train trip, she was on her way to Champlain, IL. When my wife returned to Chicago, she told me of this nice young lady she met on the train. Through the years, I often wondered if I would see her again & in 1992 I boldly contacted the Chicago residence & was told she was in Peoria. I talked to her, but sadly, she didn't remember me. But I will forever know that this beautiful lady had lots of class & I'm proud of her success in life. She will be missed by me also.*

*Julian Wright  
1280 Rosecliff Ave  
Memphis, Tn 38116*

---

**Julian Wright** - April 27, 2013 at 11:10 AM

LI

“ Dr. Penelton was a professor of mine when I attended Bradley from 1997-2001. I was very sad to hear of her passing. Many fond memories of her as an educator and adviser to myself and many others. My condolences to her entire family. She will be missed.

*Liz Detjen Moravec  
2001 Bradley alumni*

---

Liz - April 04, 2013 at 06:15 PM

JN

“ Dr. Penelton provided a delightful experience for me as a "senior" graduate student in her Legal and Social Change class at Bradley University, Fall 2011. Finally, a professor older than me with the glow of Christian wisdom, beauty, grace and the "Joy of the LORD" upon her. She truly left a remarkable impression for good, truth, perseverance and success for her students.



*I was shocked and saddened to learn of her sudden passing. She loved her family SO deeply; and many of her points in class revolved around her precious daughters. She spoke so frequently and lovingly; we could almost capture the moment with her of being with you.*

*"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7 KJV*

*Sincerely and prayerfully,*

*Judie Noyes*

---

Judie Noyes - April 03, 2013 at 11:22 PM

JD

“ I first met Barbara when she was Barbara Smith, and had just moved to Peoria to work for the Urban League. Barbara was very active in the community, and I remember when Barbara and Jean St. Julien played my aunts in a play directed by Juliette Whittaker. The play, "Happy Ending", written by Douglas Turner Ward, was staged at Carver Center. Barbara and my late wife, Lorraine, became good friends, because during that period of time, Lorraine was on the Urban League Auxiliary Board.

*Barbara Smith Penelton was a consummate professional, who loved people, and who volunteered to do many things in the community. I was very saddened to hear of her passing, and I extend my condolences to her family. We are losing so many of our irreplaceable giants.*

---

**John Wesley Davis, Washington, DC** - March 24, 2013 at 10:30 PM

JG

“ Barbara was one of the best colleagues I have ever had. The influences that she has had on me have been amazing. I was lucky to have had her as a chair person for six years, and then luckier to have had her return while I as acting chair. She not only did so many of those reports so I did not have to learn them, but she was always there to encourage and to help me think situations through. And she lived by the belief that "Family comes first!" Yes, I watched her give to so many students and so many faculty throughout Bradley. She made each feel important and valued, and yet made each of us own our own behaviors. And yes, if we needed a bit of humor, she always provided a good story - often about either Lisa or Kim. So Lisa and Kim, and all Barb's family, you have my sincere sympathy. I know my life is so much richer because I knew Barb.

---

**Jean Marie Grant** - March 24, 2013 at 11:51 AM

SS

“ Dear Kim, I just want you to know how very sorry I am for your loss. I was touched by your mother's kindness as you were one of the first families that I met at Bradley and by far one of the most sincere. May you and your family find comfort in the fact that you are in my thoughts and most importantly my prayers. Peace, Sara Shields-Cole

---

**Sara Shields-Cole** - March 24, 2013 at 10:27 AM

DJ

“ To the family of Dr Penelton...I am honored that she was a part of my life when I moved here in '72 to attend Bradley..the good Lord knows what flowers to put in your path..she will be missed but rest assured she is with our Lord..smiling down with that contagious smile...Sending prayers that you will be comforted and given peace at this time...

*Denise Kirby- Jackson  
Peoria, il*

---

**denise jackson** - March 23, 2013 at 06:17 PM



“ Julian, Your friends at LaSalle are sorry you lost your grandmother. She sounds like she was a great person and we are sure you will miss her. We are looking forward to seeing you after Spring Break to give you a big hug.

*Your friends,  
Ian, Gigi, Laura, and Colin*

---

**A** - March 23, 2013 at 01:50 PM

ER

“ *Barbara was a source of strength and warmth, a kind and generous colleague for our mutual generation of Bradley faculty. Personally, I derived much helpful support and advice from her, whether it be on personal or professional issues. She carried herself with respect and dignity, and always seemed to find the right human touch or gesture for those in need of a good word. No one ever gave more to her University, no one ever gave more to her colleagues and students. Luckily for many of us, she made the dreary and thankless task of mundane committee work something we could bear. I shall always remember how a group of us passed the time stranded on University business in a blizzard in Chicago. It was a bracing moment of multiculturalism in practice; we all know, after all, that she was a born teacher. Thanks Barbara for making this a better world.*

*Elmo E. Roach  
Bradley Emeritus*

---

**Elmo E. Roach** - March 22, 2013 at 08:35 PM

TL

“ *Dr. Penelton was an absolutely amazing woman and mentor. She served as my academic advisor and professor from 1992 - 1997. I will always remember how kind and caring she was to me and the rest of the students. She truly made a mark and will forever be missed.*

---

**Tameka Lawrence** - March 22, 2013 at 08:32 PM

LM

“ To Kim and Lisa,  
Word's cannot express my feelings right now,  
Your Mom was such an inspiration to me  
over the years the seeds that she planted in  
my spirit still remain with me today, she told  
me to fit the punishment with the crime when it came to disciplining  
my daughter when she was little, she leaves behind a Legacy in the  
city of Peoria, she will truly be missed.



Your Friend Always  
Leia (Smith) Murray  
Boston, Ma

---

**Leia (Smith) Murray** - March 22, 2013 at 07:11 PM

BB

“ Kim and Lisa my heart breaks for you and your family. Please know  
that I am sending much love and many many prayers for each of  
you during this time of sorrow. Your mother and my friend Barbara  
was a very special person, inside and out, she will be relentless and  
uncompromisingly missed by all who knew her. May each of you  
find peace and comfort in knowing that your grief is shared by so  
many of us and may your faith sustain each of you in this time of  
sorrow. Kim and Lisa, please hold tight to your mother's memories,  
she is there watching you. Rest assured that all of us who loved her  
so much will also hold those memories close to our hearts.

Love

Beverly Travis and family (Mrs. Buck)

---

**Beverly Travis (Mrs. Buck)** - March 22, 2013 at 06:16 PM

GL

“ *My deepest sympathy and condolences to the family of this marvelous woman, teacher, mentor, and friend. May God wrap his loving arms around each of you throughout these difficult days.*  
*Georgina Heard-Labonne, Bradley University, Board of Trustees.*

---

**Georgina Heard Labonne** - March 22, 2013 at 05:32 PM

PY

“ *My deepest sympathy to Barbara's family and close friends. I'll always remember her warm smile and fun loving ways every time I saw her. She was very compassionate and caring toward others. Peace be with you.*

*Penny Young*

---

**Penny Young** - March 22, 2013 at 11:11 AM

GH

“ *To My cousins Kim Penelton-Campbell and Family,*

*It is with a heavy heart that I send out my deepest sympathies to you and your family. Aunt Bam was truly a wonderful and blessed woman who will be greatly missed. She was always full of smiles and laughter when I saw her and always had something positive to say no matter what the situation. Our hearts and prayers go out to you .*

*Grayson Hendricks and Family*  
*Edwardsville , Illinois*

---

**Grayson Hendricks** - March 22, 2013 at 10:36 AM

CM

“ I was shocked and sadden to learn of Dr. Penelton,s death. I remember her as our energetic faculty advisor of our founding line, Epsilon Eta of Alpha Kappa Alpha at Bradley University.

*Mrs. Cheris Metts*

---

**Cheris Metts** - March 22, 2013 at 09:38 AM

JT

“ Dr. Penelton was both an inspiration and a role model. Not only did I have the privilege of taking classes with her as an undergraduate, but as an educator in Peoria since graduating from Bradley I have continued to admire and appreciate her contributions to the professional community. My prayers go out to her family and friends as she will be greatly missed by all.

*Julie Traenkenschuh*

---

**Julie Traenkenschuh** - March 22, 2013 at 09:06 AM

RB

“ My deepest prayers to your entire family she was 'SIMPLY THE BEST!'

---

**Robin Burns** - March 21, 2013 at 08:06 PM

SH

“ My thoughts and prayers go out to Barbara's family. Her cheerful demeanor and sense of humor lit up Westlake Hall at Bradley University and the lives of her coworkers in the College of Education and Health Sciences as well as across campus and the community. She is greatly missed by all of us.

Sincerely,  
Starr L. Hull

---

**Starr Hull** - March 21, 2013 at 08:38 AM

BM

My thoughts and prayers are with Barbara's family. I graduated from Bradley in 1976. During my 4 yrs there I pledged Alpha Kappa Alpha and had the privilege of calling her Soro. She was a wonderful person and she will truly be missed. Rest in peace Soro.

Soro Beverly Mason, Montgomery, AL

---

**beverly mason** - March 21, 2013 at 06:10 PM

RI

“ Dr. Penelton was one of most inspirational people that have entered my life in recent years, linked by serving on the board for the Central Illinois Agency on Aging. At our final visit she was supporting me in my personal family illnesses and giving me the spiritual and motivating pep talk that I needed. I am honored to have gotten to know her and will miss her competence and compassion.

---

**Roger J. Hawk, Toulon, IL** - March 20, 2013 at 10:48 PM

DM

“ *Dr Penelton was the most professional and beautiful women I have ever met. She was the first one to welcome me to Bradley and I will never forget her kindness. Her fairness and wisdom have impacted my entire career.*

*Dr. Mary Ann Manos*

---

**Dr. Mary Manos** - March 20, 2013 at 12:40 PM

HD

“ *What a great loss! Our prayers are with your family! Bishop Harold Dawson and Family.....*

---

**Harold Dawson** - March 19, 2013 at 08:31 PM