

## **Bettie: Celebrations & Her Last Year – 4/05 to 4/06**

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May 4, 2006

Bettie died on April 10, 2006 and was cremated on 4/13/2006. I will scatter her ashes according to her oft-expressed wishes. Bettie was adamant about not having a memorial service. We plan to have two celebrations of her life. One will be a “drop-by” gathering for coffee/tea and snacks from 3 to 5 PM **Saturday June 10<sup>th</sup>** at Panera Bread Restaurant, 5663 East Circle Drive, Cicero, NY 13039 (315-458-9436). This is just off of Rt. 11 in front of Lowes. The second will be an open house at our place, 4-6 PM on **Saturday July 15<sup>th</sup>** for drinks and snacks: 3605 Morrison St. NW Washington, DC. 20015 (202-966-6458). This is just east of Connecticut Ave. NW at the Safeway, just south of Chevy Chase Circle. John and Carol Nellis and Mary and I will host both events. Ed Hutchinson will join us in hosting the Syracuse one.

Here is the obituary from the Syracuse Post-Standard of April 15, 2006, p. B4.

“Bettie May Raugh, May 31, 1924 to April 10, 2006. Bettie died quickly and peacefully in the Menorah Park Jewish Senior Home on E. Genesee Street following a 10 months stay. She was a fascinating and delightful person with many friends who were attracted to her but also became friends amongst themselves. Bettie was born in California but moved to Upstate NY with her father when he came to manage a hotel in a small town near Syracuse. Following Bachelors and Masters degrees from Syracuse University, Bettie patiently and diligently taught primary school in the Syracuse area for 30 years. She took time off twice in the 1960s - once for a round-the- world trip and again for two years to teach at Nairobi Primary School in Kenya. Following her retirement in 1986 Bettie traveled amongst her friends in the US, Africa and the UK, delighting them and enthralling their children. She was fond of saying, “I’m the only one of my kind.” Sadly for her friends, this appears to have been true.”

I can supplement this with information about Bettie's last year, which is essentially the time period when she was knocked off kilter by sickness. For a couple of years before this Bettie was experiencing some dementia and arthritis but was coasting along on a pretty even keel, living happily in her beautiful home on Lake Oneida. She was generally content and had mellowed so that she expressed gratitude for her friendships, even those she'd torpedoed in the past. It was a great joy to talk to her on the phone, which I did weekly, even from far away places like Africa, Afghanistan, New Zealand, etc. Visits for short stints were also nice, although meaningful conversations required first jogging her memory with stories from the past - a fun thing to do. The only hint of decline was that Ed Hutchinson, a friend she gained - like all of us - just by being Bettie, was spending increasing amounts of time and effort attending to her needs.

All this changed in April 2005 when Bettie got an infection became confused and disoriented and needed hospitalization. The infection and hospitalization made her uncharacteristically passive and uninterested. The doctors at the hospital were skeptical about her chances but time would prove the correctness of Lew William's earlier statement that “Bettie's a tough old broad.” Bettie was disengaged but sweet-tempered through some pretty gruesome hospital and rehabilitation experiences during April-June 2005. She perked up noticeably in the next few months after Carol Nellis and I placed her in assisted living under the care of pleasant, caring people at the Menorah Park Jewish Senior Home. We furnished her room in Menorah Park with her own furniture and mementos, “Bettie things,” that made her feel comfortable. Better nutrition and companionable attention made her less adamant about dying. Mentally she was also recovering a bit, making my phone conversations with her enjoyable again. About 30 hours before she died she began complaining about abdominal discomfort. There was discussion about taking her to the emergency room, but Bettie did it her way: Gently but quickly fading away rather than enduring another emergency room visit. --- Bob Myers