

A woman before her time.

You could consider Laura Breece a woman before her time.

From the time she was a little girl she worked hard, determined to rise above her humble beginnings to make her own way in what was then considered a "man's world."

Born Jan. 17, 1917 in the small town of Okay, Okla., Laura was fourth from the youngest in a family with 13 brothers and sisters. Though it's easy to get lost in a large family, Laura's pride would lead her down a different path. She wanted to be seen for what she was, what she accomplished, not for her family's lack of money. She would walk to school, taking the standard lunch of a boiled egg and biscuit for those who couldn't afford much else. Laura didn't want to be grouped in with those who had the "poor kids' lunch" and she would often hide when she ate to keep her lunch a secret.

Laura worked the fields with her siblings when she wasn't studying hard at school. In fact, she was studying so hard she skipped three grades and graduated when she was 15 years old.

"I was considered precocious because I was smart," Laura said, a proud smile on her face.

Laura borrowed \$300 from her older sister and headed to the "big city" of Muskogee to study at Draughn's Business College. She roomed with a couple in town, cleaning their home and taking care of errands during the day when she wasn't in school, studying by kerosene lamp at night.

While there, Laura met the man she would be married to for 65 years, Ralph. "I went on a double date with Betsy, a friend of mine from Draughn's, and met him," Laura said. They fell in love, and married when she was only 18 years old.

Laura and Ralph started building a family, eventually having three children — Barbara, Dana and Kenneth. Laura focused on motherhood, but was also determined to be a working woman, making her own way in the world. "At that time, everyone else's mom stayed home. But we were always very proud of her because she worked and was different from other mothers. We didn't feel neglected," her daughter Dana said.

In the 1930s, Laura went to work for the Department of Agriculture in Oklahoma City for a few years, before she and Ralph made their way back to Muskogee, where she went to work for the Bureau of Indian Affairs as the executive secretary. Laura was

Laura Breece ►



Laura at work at the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

frequently recognized at work for her hard work and dedication, not to mention her excellent stenograph skills. Ralph opened the "Modern Machine Shop," where he built machine parts for clients.

"I used to work in the shop, sweeping the floor and stuff, and mama made me quit. I remember she got on to dad, saying 'no girl should be doing that!'" Dana said. "She felt strongly about a woman having her independence, but also that they should be feminine."

Dana recalls traveling to Tulsa twice a year to get clothes for school, an event that was a treat. "We would always get dressed up and go to the good stores for my clothes. Mama had credit accounts at those stores in her name, not hers and dad's, but only hers. We would try on funny hats, goof off and then she always took me to lunch wherever I wanted to go."

While she was strong and independent most of her life, Laura was eventually felled by something she had no control over when

Time continued on page 3.

Volunteers

IT ALL BEGAN WITH

Let's take a sentimental journey. We are nearing our 20th anniversary at Hospice of Green Country and over the course of time I can recall points of interest that stick out in my mind.

From the beginning, there are many people who stand out in my memory as those who not only welcomed me, but taught and listened to me. They include Mary Lincoln, Becky Armstrong, RN, the late Rhoda Chastain, Dr. Richard Marple, P.J. Johnson, RN, Sharon Thoele and former board vice president Ron Peters. At times, they laughed at my jokes and loud conversation. I even scared a few with my excited outbursts. This group played a very important role in not only shaping me, but my other classmates while we took the Hospice 101 course. This was not an easy assignment for the early day administrators. There was much to teach the new volunteers and there was so much to take in, but it was all so very interesting to me—a new adventure.

We were small in the beginning and there were only two other hospice organizations within Tulsa when I came on board. There were a lot of requests and proposals for community financial assistance from our directors during the early years. The volunteers helped get the word out by hosting various fundraisers. These activities helped bring the message of Hospice of Green Country to the forefront in Tulsa and the surrounding area.

It took everyone bringing their talents, abilities, knowledge and a lot of hard work to get the organization up and running. The generous gifts from fellow Tulsans as well as business and civic groups helped make Hospice of Green Country what it is today. Throughout our 20 years of serving the metropolitan area with the excellent care of hospice there have been many changes—new staff and board members, not to mention volunteers. But I firmly believe there is one aspect that has not changed — the mission of Hospice of Green Country — to provide compassionate and quality end-of-life care for patients and their families.

I am often asked about my hospice volunteering. Why and how do I keep focused and energized when I am actually facing a

“losing battle.” I don't always answer those questions but I try to leave them with this phrase I learned many years ago. “We're all terminal; some of us are just going sooner than others.”

When I spell out the word **H-O-S-P-I-C-E**, these are the memories I have from volunteering over the years.

HOME — Whether a tent, a palace or a simple room, it is yours and you feel safe and comfortable there.

OTHERS — The Hospice of Green Country team, from its social workers to volunteers.

SECURITY — The placing of his or her trust in the hands of caring individuals.

PEOPLE — These are nurses, friends, chaplains and volunteers.

INDEPENDENCE — The patient has control until the very end.

CARING — The first call to the caregiver and a caring atmosphere.

EVERYONE — It takes all of us to make the team successful.

In closing, I say this to staff members Benelle and Jeannie for their gracious compliments to each of us as volunteers. Your dedication and interest, even with all the continued stress we may cause, keeps us motivated and proud to be a part of such a great organization. I appreciate the love and dedication you have shown to us.

“Gonna take a sentimental journey, gonna set my heart at ease...gonna take a sentimental journey to renew ol' memories . . .” ✨

For information on volunteering, contact Benelle Reeble, Ph.D., CVA, Director of Volunteer Services at 747-2273.

David L Blackburn
Volunteer class of '89



LIVE LIKE YOU WERE DYING

Tim McGraw sings a song, "Live Like You Were Dying," which is about a man talking to another man who has just been diagnosed with cancer. The man with cancer advises the other man about how he became a better friend, a better husband, and did some of the things he always wanted to do but had put off doing. The diagnosis of cancer made him realize his time on this earth was running out.

There have been new therapies that have come along that prolong the life of many with terminal illnesses. Twenty years ago, many diagnosed with a terminal illness may not have lived long, but today in 2007, they are still living life to the fullest with the help of medicine and hospice care. This can be deceiving because things can change quickly. For this reason, I advocate that you plan for life and death responsibly. It's extremely important to let your family know your wishes for medical treatment should you not be able to speak for yourself. Get a living will or advance directive together so you can receive the care you want, and your family doesn't have to guess. And make peace with yourself, your family and friends today, for tomorrow you may not get the chance. *

Frances Haas, DO, is assistant medical director for Hospice of Green Country.

Time continued from page 1.

she suffered a stroke. She went to an assisted living facility for several years, but unfortunately suffered another stroke that left her in need of constant care.

Dana and her daughter Kathy made the decision to bring Laura to live with them in Tulsa, but knew she would need more care than what they could provide, so they called Hospice of Green Country.

"I was working for the *Tulsa World*, putting together the obituaries, and I noticed how

many of them had so many good things to say about Hospice of Green Country," Dana said.

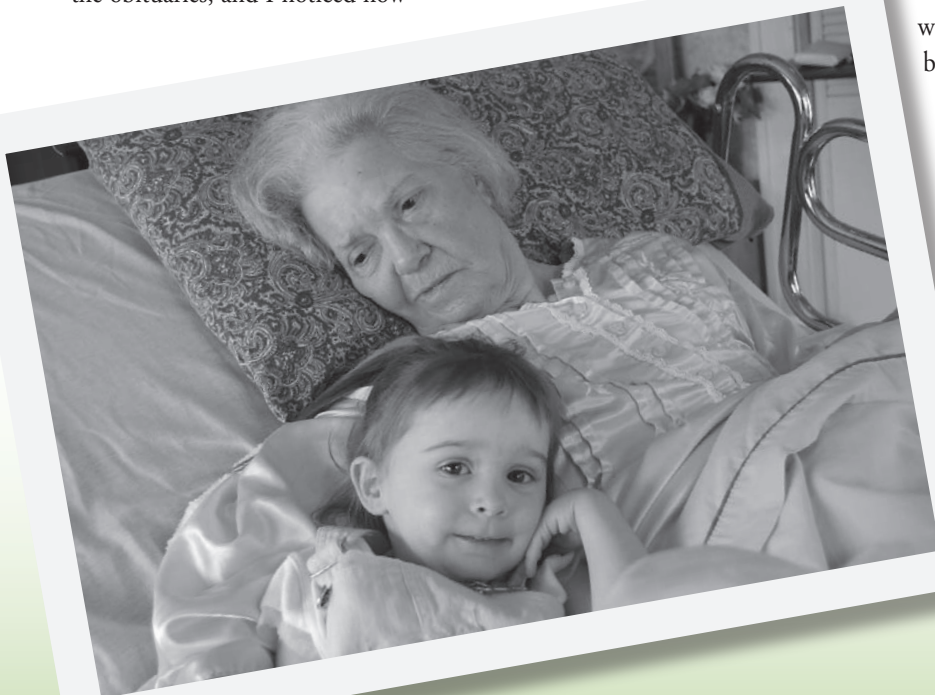
Dana and Kathy had to get Laura from Muskogee to Tulsa, and Hospice of Green Country stepped in to expedite the trip and help things go smoothly.

"Hospice of Green Country got us equipment, a social worker, nurses, everything immediately. Frankly, we weren't expecting so much help," Kathy said. "We couldn't believe it. It really makes you wonder how people took care of the elderly before hospice."

Besides the help from Hospice of Green Country, the family, including Laura, has formed a strong bond with many of the staff.

"Eydie has claimed me as her mama," Laura said about the Hospice of Green Country home health aide. "We don't hate any of them," Dana joked, but added with a soft smile, "We don't know where we would be without them. We are really quite fond of all of them." *

◀ **Laura today, with her great-great granddaughter Megan.**



Remembering with

joy

They were together for 40 years – dated for four and married for 36. They shared everything. But death and its aftermath was something Glen and Peggy Blake never discussed. Why should they? They weren't even 60 years old yet. Unfortunately, the unthinkable happened.

Peggy Blake ►



Peggy had been feeling ill for a few months and decided to seek medical attention where she and Glen received heartbreaking news of a terminal condition. Hospice of Green Country was there to provide comfortable, pain-free care to Peggy and help Glen through the process of end-of-life issues.

"I remember the Hospice of Green Country caseworker, Cheryl, was so nice. She met me at the hospital and was waiting outside Peggy's room, ready to help," Glen said.

Cheryl talked with Glen about what to expect with the grief process, but it was something that didn't process immediately. There was too much to do.

Peggy passed away 24 days later, and even then Glen didn't completely grasp that Peggy was gone until a couple of weeks later.

"I was in a major fog every day, I couldn't get off the couch. I couldn't drive anywhere because I couldn't stop crying," Glen said. "I thought it was going to kill me, but I didn't really know what 'it' was. I just knew I was completely overwhelmed with sadness."

Hospice of Green Country routinely followed up with Glen, providing literature about handling grief and making phone calls to check on him. Benelle Reeble, director of volunteer services, pointed Glen toward a widow/widower grief group that met a couple times a month. He decided to give it a try. Glen had his sister-in-law drive him to a meeting because he still couldn't drive himself anywhere.

"It was one of those things where I figured if I could just go a couple of times, then maybe I could get going again," said Glen. "When I started attending the meetings, I

remember I foolishly asked someone, as all newcomers do, 'When will I get over this?' I wanted to quit crying and be able to drive my car again. But there is no magic answer to that question. The true answer is it's different for all people and it just takes time."

That was over a year ago and Glen is still attending meetings twice a month, even though he feels he's reached his "recovery" mark. So why still go?

"It's a way for me to give back," Glen said. "I've had so many people from Hospice of Green Country and those in my group help me, and since I'm a believer in paybacks, I want to give back as much as possible."

A little more than a year later, Glen still can't believe how far he's come. He remembers going to have his taxes done last year shortly after Peggy passed. He struggled with just the task itself because it was something Peggy usually took care of.

"The guy who does my taxes is a friend of mine, and when I went last year, he asked how I was doing and I started crying," Glen remembered. "This year I went to see him and I reflected on how far I've come since then, and it's a good feeling."

"Three things got me through [the grief]. My faith, Hospice of Green Country and the widow/widower group, as well as time. Now, I can think of Peggy with joy instead of tears." *

For information on grief and bereavement assistance, contact Elizabeth Johnson, MBA, MDiv, Hospice of Green Country bereavement chaplain, at 747-2273.

TWENTY YEARS OF
Caring for the Spirit

Caring for the spirit has always been an integral part of hospice care. In the early 1960s, when Dame Cicely Saunders first used the name “hospice” to describe a means for caring for the terminally ill, chaplains were present in the audience at Yale University. Even in those formative years as the concept of hospice care was taking shape, caring for the spirit was considered a crucial aspect of the holistic care of the patient.

As the practice of spiritual care has evolved over the years, terms like pastoral care, soul care and pastoral counseling have come from our attempts to better define the role of the chaplain and train those who minister to patients and families. To further assist those called to this particular field, professional training for chaplains is now available through clinical pastoral education centers located in most metropolitan areas. Several professional organizations provide a network of peers and colleagues for chaplains to ensure that certain standards of spiritual care are maintained. All of these things work together for the benefit of the hospice patient, whose encounter with a chaplain should result in the experience of a supportive and non-judgmental ally with no agenda but to be a companion to the patient on their spiritual and/or emotional journey.

Spiritual care is something we don’t “write off” at Hospice of Green Country. Chaplains are an active and collaborative part of the hospice care team and work closely with nurses, home health aides, volunteers and social workers to provide spiritual support for patients and their families. We support people of all faith backgrounds and also provide emotional support for patients with no particular belief system. We often provide spiritual materials in the form of sacred texts, music, spiritual reading materials and sacred symbols that are meaningful to the patient as an extension of their spiritual practice. We’ve been creative in ministering spiritual care for our patients, including grief support for the loss of a pet, assistance with birthday or anniversary related celebrations and guidance with spiritual ceremonies and rituals. We have a dedicated bereavement chaplain who provides grief support and resources for families working through the loss of a loved one. Even when patients decline chaplain visits, chaplains offer support for staff and remain available in case patient or family needs change over time. Memorial services and individual spiritual support for hospice staff are also a crucial aspect of spiritual care for those in the work of hospice.

For 20 years, we’ve been proud to provide these services, and we look forward to 20 more years of spiritual growth in hospice care. ✱

Rev. Delana Taylor is the director of spiritual care for Hospice of Green Country.

All in the Family

It's not an easy task to decide how to care for a parent who has received a life-altering diagnosis and will need around-the-clock care, but the Juby family wasn't afraid to meet the challenge head-on.

In September 2005, the matriarch of the Juby family, Wilda, was admitted to the hospital, suffering from dehydration. There, she and her six children received news of her terminal condition. Wilda would need constant care, and they knew they had a big decision to make. Ricky, the youngest, made sure the entire family was in on the decision.

"Seeing her there at the hospital, you could tell immediately she didn't like it because it wasn't home, she didn't want to be there," Ricky said. "We knew she had to be with family, but the biggest question was where exactly."



Wilda and Ricky Juby

The only debate was where to take her. Ricky and Wilda lived next door to each other on the family's dairy farm in Sperry. His four brothers all lived in the surrounding area, and his sister Linda lived in Dallas. They thought Dallas would be too confusing for Wilda, so Ricky decided to bring her back home to Sperry and be her primary care giver.

He didn't come to that decision without thinking of the responsibility that lay ahead. "I wanted Ricky to give it a lot thought because I had taken care of one of our family members and it was tough. I knew he could do it, I just wanted him to be aware of what needed to be done," his sister Linda said.

Ricky talked it over with his wife and children because he knew they would be helping take care of Wilda as well, and everyone was in agreement to bring her back to her own home. Hospice of Green Country met with the family soon after Wilda came home to help provide comfortable and pain-free care.

"They suggested things that have been so helpful, like the small video camera and monitor that I leave in Mom's house so I can see what's going on there when I'm at my house," Ricky said. "When the nurses and home health aides come out to check her vitals and bathe her it gives me a little more time to take care of things I need to."

The care Hospice of Green Country has provided goes beyond just the physical. Delana Taylor, director of spiritual care, is a frequent visitor to the Juby household. "Hospice of Green Country has really provided for my spiritual needs. I enjoy visiting with Delana as much as mom does," Ricky said.

Linda comes to Sperry as often as possible to pitch in, many times when her kids have a break from school. "I'll stay with mom and try to give Ricky a break since he's with her most of the time." Ricky seconded what a big help that was. "She gives the house a good cleaning, something I'm not very good at."

More than a year later, the Juby family is still happy with their decision to bring Wilda home, and Ricky thinks it's all part of the paycheck he owes Wilda. "The way I look at it, Mom was always taking care of us, and I felt that it's my turn to give a little back." *



Tamra Moore, RN

This year marks Hospice of Green Country's 20th year of providing hospice care to our community. The original founders identified a need, developed a vision for providing end-of-life care, and dedicated two years to planning and securing resources in order to realize their goal. Over the years, the dedicated staff and volunteers built a strong reputation for living the agency's mission

of providing quality and compassionate end-of-life care, regardless of ability to pay. Today, that reputation remains intact and is evidenced by not only the high percentage of referrals received from family and friends of past patients but by the praise received from our community.

"She became more than his nurse. She treated Bill and me with utmost tender kindness, understanding, love and thoughtful care.

She is the kind of person I or anyone would treasure as a lifetime friend. Thank you for the blessings Suzanne brought to us."
From a patient's wife.

It is not uncommon to hear staff mention they are proud to work with an organization that places such high regard on the quality of care. This standard permeates all aspects of Hospice of Green Country including billing practices, marketing ethics, development processes, staff and volunteer recognition — all to support and facilitate excellent patient care.

Though we continue to live by our mission, there are some challenges in our future. The nursing shortage is predicted to continue, bills to decrease Medicare funding of hospice benefits are forecasted and Oklahoma still remains one of five states without a Medicaid hospice benefit. The latter challenges could mean members of our community may not seek end-of-life care, fearing the cost too great. I challenge you to join us in spreading the word that Hospice of Green Country is about *a better way of caring* — regardless of ability to pay.

Tamra Moore, RN
Executive Director

from the president



Jim Huff

Looking back on 20 years of providing a better way of caring in the community, there are some things to consider when we look at what we've accomplished. Do we consider ourselves successful? By what standards do we measure success? I suppose that non-profit boards have struggled with this thorny question for years. Profitable ventures can always look to the bottom

line for achievements against established goals or standards, but in the non-profit world such measurements are a bit more abstract.

I believe the following factors suffice as reasonable measurements for how well Hospice of Green Country has accomplished its mission.

Community Benefit

During the past two decades, Hospice of Green Country has cared for 4,884 patients. More than an estimated 600 of those were Courtesy Care patients. In addition to Courtesy Care, Hospice of Green Country has developed programs for Live Alone patients as well as the Hispanic Outreach program *Brazos Abiertos*.

Public Opinion

Public opinion is probably the best evaluator of success. A good measure is our success in fundraising. Thanks to the generosity and giving spirit of our donors, public and individual support has

totaled \$4,263,015 over the past 20 years — nearly five times as much in the second decade than in the first.

Client Evaluations

Hospice is continually seeking ways to improve patient care. Patient/family evaluations are sought on all programs to evaluate overall satisfaction.

Financial Stability

Two principal factors in maintaining financial stability are (1) a stable patient census and (2) patient cost control. With the sizeable growth in competition in the past five years, a predictable patient census in Oklahoma has become problematic. That said, our cash position has remained healthy through careful cost control management.

Our Mission

Our stated mission is to provide compassionate, quality, end-of-life care to patients and their families, regardless of ability to pay. By any of our standards, Hospice of Green Country has fulfilled its promise through equal treatment for all, continually evaluating its care, judicious financial management and the development of new programs that reach an even broader patient base.

Certainly, these achievements were only made possible by our dedicated volunteers, donors and employees who all give so much. On behalf of the board of directors, we thank you and appreciate you all.

Jim Huff
President, Board of Directors

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Executive Director

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Hospice of Green Country, Inc.

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Our Mission

Hospice of Green Country is a nonprofit, community-based, multi-faith and multi-cultural United Way agency dedicated to providing compassionate and quality end-of-life care to patients and families – regardless of ability to pay.



Tulsa Area United Way



Joint Commission

on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations

www.hospiceofgreencountry.org

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hospice events

Mark Your Calendar!

Friday, April 20

*Volunteer Appreciation Banquet
All Souls Unitarian Church*

Friday, September 7

United Way Day of Caring

Hospice of Green Country Staff

Dala Jarolim, MD – Medical Director
William Smith, MD – Medical Director
Frances Haas, DO – Assistant Medical Director

Lorena Arista-Whelan
Cleshona Brewer, CHHA
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Horace Wellons, MDiv
Janie Wood, RN

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