



Dr. Joyce Elaine Bender

May 28, 1941 - February 17, 2026

Joyce Elaine Bender was born on May 28, 1941, in Alfalfa County, to Vernon (Tullis) and Erval Jackson at the Cherokee Masonic Hospital in Cherokee, Oklahoma. She passed away peacefully on February 17, 2026 at the age of 84.

Joyce was a proud graduate of Burlington High School in Burlington, Oklahoma, class of 1959, where she served as salutatorian and graduated at the top of her class. On July 24, 1960, she married the love of her life, Royce Bender, in a ceremony at the Christian Church in Burlington. Their partnership spanned decades, rooted in shared values, family, and support for education in northwest Oklahoma.

To their marriage, two sons, Todd and Lee, were born.

A dedicated educator, Joyce pursued higher education with determination. She earned her bachelor's degree from Northwestern Oklahoma State University (NWOSU) in Alva, where she and Royce made their home and became longtime supporters of the NWOSU Foundation.

Joyce started her teaching career in South Haven, Kansas, before transferring to Cherokee, Oklahoma. She taught English there while raising her sons until 1987.

Later in her career, Joyce achieved her PhD in English Education from Oklahoma State University (OSU) in Stillwater. This accomplishment reflected

her passion for literature, teaching, and empowering students.

Joyce served as a Professor of English at Oklahoma Panhandle State University (OPSU) in Goodwell, Oklahoma, from 1993 to 2003 (earning emerita status upon retirement). She also taught at NWOSU and Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Her work influenced countless students through her expertise in English and her commitment to academic excellence. Joyce and Royce were generous community members and donors, frequently recognized in NWOSU Foundation reports for their philanthropy. They enjoyed a quiet life in Alva, cherishing family, faith, and the friendships built over many years in the region.

Joyce is survived by her husband, Royce Bender, of Alva; her two sons, Todd Bender of Cherokee, Oklahoma, and Lee and Lisa Bender of Spearfish, South Dakota; and one granddaughter, Shelby Bender, of Colorado Springs, Colorado.

In lieu of flowers family asked that you Donate to Beatles Nursing Home

Cemetery Details

Alva Municipal Cemetery

1698 Flynn Street
Alva, OK 73717

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR 5. 1:00 PM (CT)

Alva Municipal Cemetery
1698 Flynn Street
Alva Municipal Cemetery, OK 73717

Tribute Wall



“ *View and Download the Funeral Program*

Wharton Funeral Chapel - March 04 at 04:25 PM



“ *Wharton Funeral Chapel created a Tribute Video in memory of Dr. Joyce Elaine Bender*



Wharton Funeral Chapel - March 04 at 04:25 PM



“ *I did not know Joyce personally, but she and Royce were our neighbors at Wood Lake. We were so sorry to hear about her passing. Thoughts and prayers to her family!*

Lydia Campbell - April 06 at 11:32 AM



“ 21 files added to the album *Joyce Memories Album*



Wharton Funeral Chapel - March 04 at 04:27 PM

TA

“ *Joyce was one of my favorite teachers in high school. She encouraged my writing and when I was taking Spanish and French at the same time, she gave me credit as long as it was a foreign language. She was the best.*

Ted Atchley - February 26 at 09:23 PM

TK

“ *Sending my deepest condolences to those closest to Dr. Bender. I took several of my upper-level literature courses with her at OPSU, and I enjoyed them all. I was proud when she commended my "scathingly funny" review of Emily Dickinson's work. I am so sorry for your loss. She was an excellent professor and a remarkable woman! --Tandy Keenan*

Tandy Keenan - February 25 at 01:57 PM

VE

“ *My deepest condolences, Joyce and I took care of one Aunt's final decision and took many trips visiting our last Aunt Dora. Rest in peace dear cousin. Verleta Eckels*

Verleta Eckels - February 23 at 10:49 PM