



Rosemary Owens (Bolivar)

DEC 25, 1937 - MAR 20, 2024



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Table of Contents

Obituary	Page 3
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Rose Mary Owens, 86, of Springfield, Mo. (formerly of Bolivar), passed away peacefully on Wednesday, March 20, 2024, at Citizens Memorial Hospital in Bolivar. She was born on Christmas Day, 1937, the daughter of Hubert Owens and Esther Maxine Owens of Lamar, Mo.

Rose Mary was a graduate of Lamar High School, Pittsburgh State University (B.M.), and University of Missouri-Columbia (M.A. and Ph.D.) She held Licentiates from the Royal Academy of Music in London (Performer of Singing, Teacher of Music), having studied voice with the Dame Eva Turner, an internationally acclaimed prima donna, dramatic soprano, and teacher. Other private teachers included Judy Bounds Coleman, Harry Morrison, and John Street.

In her early life, Rose Mary performed as a soprano soloist in numerous oratorios and operas, including Handel's Messiah; Bach's Mass in B minor; Faure's Requiem; Puccini's La Boheme, Suor Angelica, and Tosca; Britten's Albert Herring; and Mozart's Cosi fan tutte. Throughout the years, she performed and sang in many additional roles with the Springfield Regional Opera, Missouri State productions, and Springfield Little Theatre. She also directed or served as vocal coach in high school, community theatre, and college productions across southwest Missouri.

A lifelong teacher, she spent her early years teaching music in public schools in Hartville and Bolivar. In 1971 she began a 39-year teaching career at Missouri State University (then SMSU) as professor of Voice, Singing and Diction, Song and Opera Literature, Vocal Pedagogy and Introduction to Music. She also served as a clinician and adjudicator in music festivals and competitions throughout Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas. During the 1994-95 school year, she spent a sabbatical leave serving as an invited Foreign Educational Expert and Visiting Professor of Music at Northwest Normal University in Lanzhou, Gansu Province, China. Among many honors, she received the Teaching Award at Missouri State University three times, in 1998, 2000 and 2003. In addition to her teaching duties, Rose Mary enjoyed leading the choir at Southminster Presbyterian Church in Springfield, and until her death, she was still conducting the music at Stockton United Methodist Church in Stockton, Mo.



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Rose Mary was an engaging storyteller and would regale old friends and new acquaintances alike with story after story about her life experiences, turning what would be mundane occurrences for most people into entertaining high adventure. She loved playing cards, dining out, attending operas and plays, and, especially, traveling with friends. She was a die-hard fan of the MSU Lady Bears and the St. Louis Cardinals.

Rose Mary was preceded in death by her parents and her brother Jerry Hubert Owens of Farmington, Maine. She is survived by her sister-in-law, Mary Sue Hayden, of Farmington, Maine; nephew Mark S. Owens and wife Barbara of Raleigh, NC, and their sons Nathaniel and Graham; nephew Frank Hughes, Titusville, FL, and his daughters Julianna and Kaylee. She also leaves behind a host of friends and students, many of whom remember her as the “best teacher I ever had,” “demanding but kind,” and “an inspiration to many.”

A private memorial will be held at a later date. Memorial contributions may be made to the Rose Mary Owens Endowed Choral Fund at Missouri State University, Springfield Little Theatre, or a charity of choice.

To send flowers or a memorial gift to the family of Rose Mary Owens please visit our Sympathy Store.



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