

Barbara Bixby

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You probably knew that Barbara Brown Bixby was a great mother to all her kids and very gracious to everyone she met. She was a wonderful cook and decorator, very organized, who couldn't wait to get outside and work hard on her yard and garden.

But she was also different from many others her age. You probably didn't know that using computers through decades, she researched, wrote and distributed a genealogy of her two family names, transferred the color slides and old photo negatives of a long life, did the same with the family's large LP collection, and listened to her iPod nightly as declining vision kept her from reading books. She also used the Internet while a synthesized voice would read back what she found with her hand-held magnifier. Her Web camera allowed four loving kids to look in and visit with her each day from many locations.

You also probably didn't know that Barbara was from

Billings, Mont. While a teenager, she came very close to dying when injured by a horse and was out of school for a year. But she went on to Colorado Women's College in Denver for two years, and then Montana State College. It was there that Barbara marched out front of the band and was selected by actor Gary Cooper to be a college beauty queen.

She also met Harlan Bixby there. Harlan had established himself at Montana State with his dance orchestra. The Bobcat, their college annual, attests to the beginning of a long and happy relationship which began with their graduation and marriage in 1938.

They grew their musical family mostly in the Shoreline area and moved to Whidbey Island in 1975, after he retired. Though Harlan died in 1976, Barbara went on to stay in touch with 11 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren. She also volunteered for many causes, including St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, Seattle's Ryther Child Center and Whidbey's Home Health Care & Hospice.

Barbara died near her computer on the morning of Feb. 24, 2010, a few days before her 95th birthday on March 1. She was probably looking for something more to keep her busy this year.

In addition to her surviving brother Rocky Brown of Billings, she leaves her four children: Beverly, Harlan, Alan and Brad, and their families.

A family memorial for Barbara and Harlan will be held in late May. In lieu of flowers, Barbara asked that contributions be made to Home Health Care & Hospice of Whidbey Island, 101 N. Main St., Coupeville, WA 98239.