



# Dr. Harold Bowie

OCT 1, 1931 - JAN 14, 2014



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MEMORIAL PARK  
Funeral Home & Cemetery

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## **Dr. Harold Bowie**

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**D**r. Dennis Harold Bowie, 82, was welcomed into the kingdom of heaven on January 14, 2014, by his Savior, Jesus Christ, and by his wife of sixty-three years and best friend, Patsy Hogan Bowie. He was also preceded in death by his parents Paul and Audrey Bowie and his son Bobby Bowie. He is survived by his son Steve Bowie (Tina); his daughters Sherri Bowie Spain (Robert) and Molly Bowie Cook (Rick); his daughter-in-law Julie Trevathan Bowie; and his sister Shirley Cooper. He has a lifetime bond with his sister-in-laws Aileen Cathey and Sunny Evans and helped raise nephews Ronn and Jerry Rubio. He was Grandad/Gaddy to eleven grandchildren: Andrew Bowie (Louisa), Leigh Bowie Glenn (Andy), Stephen Bowie (Lauren), Sadie Spain Ferrante (Tony), Sunny Spain Watt (Ian), Sarah Spain Sullins (Jeremiah), Stevie Spain, Aidan Bowie, Brand Cook (Mallory), Jordan Bowie Cook, and Michal Lauren Cook; and to eleven great grandchildren: Catherine and Thomas Bowie; Taylor and Keaton Ferrante; Betsy, Mary Hogan, Anderson, and Jackson Bowie Glenn; Harper "Happy" Watt; and Peyton and Hogan Sullins. Born in Conway, AR, a 9-year old Bowie watched the plane crash in which his father died. His sister Shirley was two, and Bowie immediately became the man of the house. At age 10, he worked in restaurants and fields, and at 14 he worked on a soft drink truck, driving the truck and lifting full cases of bottled drinks. He finished high school in three years, finished college in three, and was teaching school by age 19. He met his Pat when they were 15. While he was in high school, he excelled in athletics, particularly baseball. He played in a semi-professional baseball league and even got a tryout with the New York Yankees. Dr. Bowie earned bachelors and masters degrees from the University of Arkansas, did postgraduate work at the University of Arkansas and University of Tennessee, and earned a doctorate in education from then-Memphis State University. He taught in Arkansas public schools for three years, worked in public relations for Arkansas Power & Light for three, was a teacher and



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administrator for Harding University for three, and came to Harding Academy in Memphis in 1961. Memphis Christian School had been a small fledgling school founded in 1952. In 1955, the board asked Harding College in Searcy, AR, to take over operation of the school. Dr. George Benson, college president and Bowie's mentor, renamed the school Harding Academy of Memphis and in 1961 sent Dr. Bowie to serve as superintendent. So began Bowie's lifelong passion—he called it his “Magnificent Obsession”—with this Christian school that would span almost four decades. Dr. Bowie stood at the helm of Harding Academy, first as superintendent and then as president and CEO, for thirty-seven years that saw vast and sweeping changes in the country and culture. He prayerfully and skillfully navigated the changes that took the school from an enrollment of 300 to over 2900 in the 1970s. He has been the single most influential person in the story of Harding Academy. Bowie was a visionary, a pioneer, and an innovator. He disdained mediocrity but loved innovation. He created satellite elementary schools in church educational buildings, a model that was implemented by other schools across the country. Under Bowie, Harding became the first school in the Memphis area to build a week of fall break into its calendar. Now all schools including public schools have fall breaks. As a leader in the Memphis Association of Independent Schools, he was a singular force in establishing best practices and fraternal collegiality among his peer administrators. With his friends Dr. Bill Ruhl of Goodpasture School in Nashville and Jesse Long of Greater Atlanta Christian School, Bowie founded an organization of Christian schools known today as National Christian Schools Association. Bowie mentored a number of administrators and served as a consultant in Christian schools nationwide. Exercising his natural business acumen for creative solutions, in 1973 he developed his first outside business venture with a food service program for schools which is still in operation after forty years under the Sodexo brand. After his retirement from Harding Academy in 1998, he co-founded Bowie Reading and Learning Center in Nashville with his son Dr. Bobby Bowie, who died suddenly in 2003. During this time, Bowie came out of retirement for a few years to be the head of Rossville Christian Academy. Following his leadership at Rossville, the family moved The Bowie Center to Memphis, where he served as president until his death.



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The Bowie Center is now led and operated by Bowie's two daughters Sherri Bowie Spain and Molly Bowie Cook, the Bowie Center is a leading educational resource in the Memphis area, serving hundreds of children and their families through innovative and intentional learning concepts. With Bowie, the wheels were always turning. He kept his trusty "computer," a small yellow pad, handy to jot down ideas that came to him as well as his daily to-do lists, some for himself and some for the rest of us. He gained energy from dreaming, and he was always planning, creating, rethinking, and trying to improve. He believed that if an idea was a good one, it should be implemented now, not next year. He was never satisfied with the status quo and constantly challenged himself and others to look for ways to improve, innovate, and create. This 82-year old man could outpace most people of any age. Anyone who ever walked with him had to work to keep up. Even though he told the same stories sometimes, it wasn't because he had forgotten, because he was as sharp as a tack. People truly loved hearing the stories again and again. He cheered for the Razorbacks, laughed at "I Love Lucy," played Santa Claus every Christmas Eve, ate off your plate if your food appealed to him, read the Bible through again and again, never forgot to call you on your birthday and sing to you, took an occasional pie in the face, relished powerfully strong coffee, knew to the dollar every detail of the budget, could make you do something you didn't want or intend to do—in a way that somehow make you thank him, and loved his dog Bessie Ruth. He gave us all the best of himself with nothing held back: he was honest, sacrificial, inspiring, humble, generous, faithful, selfless, intentional, and dependable, and his extravagant love was accompanied by extraordinary, practical wisdom and personal integrity. He believed deeply and lived unapologetically what he believed. Bowie and Miss Pat were longtime members of the White Station Church of Christ. Visitation with the family will be Saturday, January 18, in Ellers Gymnasium at Harding Academy (1100 Cherry Road) 12:00-2:00 with the funeral at 2:00 in O. O. Emmons Auditorium. A graveside service will follow at Memorial Park Cemetery (5668 Poplar Avenue). In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to the Dr. Harold and Miss Pat Bowie Scholarship Fund at Harding Academy (1100 Cherry Road, Memphis, TN 38117). For Dr. Bowie and Miss Pat, January 14, 2014, was the beginning of eternity together



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—“the best years ever.”“For the eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him” 2 Chronicles 16:9Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to Memorial Park Funeral Home and Cemetery, 5668 Poplar Ave. Memphis, TN 38119, (901)767-8930, “Behind the Stone Wall”



## Tribute Wall

**Dr. Harold Bowie**

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EH

**Eddy Jan Hamilton** posted:

Dr Bowie's family, We are so sorry for your loss. We loved Dr Bowie and greatly appreciated his wisdom, leadership and friendship. We were out of town and just now are hearing of Dr Bowie passing away. We were talking yesterday of how we needed to get by and see him. Praying for y'all, love Eddy & Jan Hamilton

January 22 at 4:24 AM

SW

**Swain** posted:

So many families have been touched by yours over the years. We are so thankful our families have been apart of those years and more to come. Our prayers are with you, Fran and Jack Swain

January 18 at 2:47 PM

GS

**Gina Simonetti** posted:

The Bowie Family,Dr. Bowie has touched the lives of so many. We are grateful for his vision to help create The Bowie Center which provides a safe and loving learning environment for children with unique needs and learning differences. We have been part of the family for seven years and are blessed to continually see our son grow socially and academically.John, Gina, Marisa, Samantha and Blaise Simonetti

January 18 at 5:37 AM

JR

**Jerry & Dot Riggs** posted:

The Bowie Family,We shall never forget the things that Dr. Bowie did for us and our children over the past years and for all the children of Harding Academy.We will miss him calling us on our birthdays but we know he is much happier with Miss Pat and Bobby.Thanks for the " MEMORIES" that he helped us make.Love,Dot and Jerry Riggs

January 17 at 2:48 PM



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BT

**Billy Joe Thrasher** posted:

I have just learned of my good friend Dr. Harold Bowie's death. Our friendship goes back many years to Harding days. He has been a mentor to me over the last forty years. He was one of the men responsible for my taking my first job as President of a private Christian school in Tulsa Oklahoma. I told him I did not want to be a fund-raiser, just wanted to run the school. Harold suggested that I hire a person to be the fund-raiser. He lasted about 3 weeks and I learned quickly that part of the the President's job must also be fund-raising!! Harold knew this all along but wanted me to find out for myself how important that part of the job really is. Harold was such a gifted person that God used in so many ways and his positive influence lives through the lives of those privileged to have known him. I had a good visit with Harold by phone about three weeks ago, I will always cherish that last conversation. My wife Barbara and I send our deepest sympathy to his fine family as we say good-bye to our dear friend and brother. Billy Joe Thrasher, President Emeritus, Columbia Academy

January 17 at 6:38 AM

HM

**Hallie Marker** posted:

We send our love and condolences to Dr. Bowie's beautiful family. We loved him and will miss him. Hallie, Jeffrey, and Adin Marker

January 16 at 6:52 PM

DG

**David Gearhardt** posted:

As a 1981 graduate, would have never dreamed that my Special Needs son would have found such a loving home in the Bowie Reading & Learning Center which Dr Bowie helped start in Nashville. We have been blessed to have Byers in school and always enjoyed visiting with Dr Bowie on occasion when dropping by to say hello. Heaven just became even a better place!!

January 16 at 5:54 PM



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BD

**Bob Diles** posted:

Dr. Harold Bowie was my boss, friend, mentor, encourager, and brother. I have so many pleasant memories of my association with him. I will share only two. (Out of respect, I never could bring myself to call him Harold, although he insisted that I do so). One day Dr. Bowie told me he knew that I loved baseball and had played for Harding College. He believed that Harding Academy should have a baseball program and that I should coach it. He promised that he would be my assistant as his schedule permitted. Dr. Bowie had been an outstanding baseball player. Under those conditions, how could I refuse? Dr. Bowie showed up for the first practice and I never saw him again except as he came to support and watch the games. He and I laughed about that many times. Dr. Bowie never asked me to do anything that he wasn't willing to do himself. About 11 p.m. one evening he called me and said that the high school chorus had an emergency. Their bus had broken down and they were stranded in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Thirty minutes later he and I pulled another bus out of the parking lot at the Academy and headed for Gatlinburg. We needed to be there early so the chorus could continue their trip the next morning. We drove through the night stopping only for gasoline when necessary. We didn't stop even to change drivers. To stay alert and to keep from tiring, we changed places without stopping about every hour. I would rise from the drivers seat and Dr. Bowie would slide under me and then I would do the same as we kept the bus rolling through the night. We arrived in Gatlinburg before it was time for the chorus to depart. Dr. Bowie caught a plane back to Memphis and left me to bring the other bus home after it was repaired. I offer my condolences to all the Bowie family. Bob Diles

January 16 at 11:17 AM

WK

**William Krieger** posted:

As a Harding 1980 alum, I give thanks for the life of Dr. Bowie. He always "walked the walk." Blessings and condolences be unto his family and loved ones. Godspeed Dr. Bowie.

January 16 at 4:38 AM

RA

**Robert Akins** posted:

Dr. Harold Bowie was one of the greatest men I have ever known! He and "Miss Pat" always had the heart of Jesus. I am so sad, but rejoice with the angels for them being back together with Bobby. The world is not a better place today!

January 15 at 11:14 AM



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**Memorial Park** posted:

Vivid Recollections was purchased for the family of Dr. Harold Bowie.

January 15 at 10:17 AM



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Harold by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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