



## Obituary - Betty-Jo Lunt Baker

Elizabeth Josephine Martin was born on April 4, 1933 at Saint Mary's hospital in Reno. On Nov. 4, Betty Jo passed peacefully in her home surrounded by her daughters, long-time partner George Gadda, and her beloved Springer Spaniel Maverick.

Betty Jo came from Pioneer stock. Her great-grandparents made their way from Ireland in the early 1800s, and ultimately traveled, via wagon train, to Diamond Springs, California. For decades, she made annual pilgrimages to the cemetery in Diamond Springs to pay homage to the family who came before her. She was very proud to be a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), due to both her paternal and maternal lineage. Betty Jo lived her entire life in the Biggest Little City in the World, except for a brief but adored time in Elko in 1964-1965. She was proud to be the second of four generations born in Reno.

Continuing this legacy, three of her great-granddaughters became fifth generation Nevadans.

Betty Jo was a vibrant woman and a true force of nature. While her three daughters were growing up, she stayed busy raising them and volunteering as a Pink Lady at St. Mary's hospital and as a librarian at Mt. Rose Elementary School. She subsequently became President of the UNR Alumni Board, following in her father's footsteps. She was very active both in her Tri-Delt alumni board and the Reno High School alumni board. Betty Jo was known for her familiarity with Robert's Rules of Order.

Her tenacity served her well once Betty Jo entered the work force after her divorce from Neil Lunt. After working as the secretary at Brown Elementary School and a brief stint with the local musician's union, she was hired on at the Eldorado. As a woman who always excelled at throwing parties and entertaining, she quickly found her niche. She ultimately was promoted to Executive Director of Catering and Conventions - a perfect fit for her skills and charm.

Upon leaving the Eldorado, it took two people to replace her. She made an equal impact in her work for Lifetouch Photography, which she joined after her divorce from Marv Baker. Her work at Lifetouch Photography also resulted in years of beautiful family portraits that will forever be treasured.

In her later years, Betty Jo reconnected with George Gadda, whom she first met in kindergarten. They reunited while planning their 45th High School Reunion at Reno High. Their reunion sparked a long-time love that endured until her last breath.

Eighteen years ago, Betty Jo was diagnosed with congestive heart failure. In true Betty Jo fashion, she did not go gently into that good night. Instead, Betty Jo continued to be very active with the Reno High Alumni Board, serving as President and then Reunion Chair, a role she held until her passing. She was also a trustee, volunteering at the Reno High museum. She coordinated monthly luncheons with her Tri-Delt sisters and Reno High classmates. In her earlier years, she was a fierce bridge player. She was an avid gardener. She hosted dozens of epic celebrations and gatherings, and will long be remembered for her annual Fourth of July barbecues with just 60 of her closest friends. And in Summer 2021 she organized the 70th reunion for the 1951 Reno High School class.

Betty Jo's favorite holidays included Fourth of July, Saint Patrick's Day, and Superbowl Sunday. She loved planting her vegetables and flowers (although the squirrels and deer often plotted against her). She loved watching the birds from her kitchen window. She loved Pecans at the JT in Gardnerville, the Nevada Day parade, and The Elko Cowboy Poetry Gathering. She was extraordinarily proud of her three daughters, three grandchildren, and four great granddaughters. She never met a stranger she couldn't make her friend.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Hoyt Martin and Audrey Simmons, and her brother Hoyt Martin Jr.

She is survived by her partner George Gadda, her daughters Margaret Zarubi (Gary), Susan Standish (Tom), and Jennifer Lunt. Her legacy also includes her three grandchildren, Thomas Bailie (Amanda), Patrick Cook (Greg Nipper), Hannah Cole (Nick), and four great-granddaughters, Elizabeth, Alison, and Samantha Bailie, and Ada Cole. She is also survived by her sister, Audrey Ratzberg, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Due to the pandemic, services will be postponed until the Spring. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Betty Jo's name to the Nevada Humane Society or the Reno High School Alumni scholarship fund.

Betty Jo was a strong, generous woman known by many in the community. She will never be forgotten by those who knew and loved her over her incredible 88 years. Her legacy will be continued by her daughters, her grandchildren, and her great grandchildren. The torch she passes is heavy, but we pledge to forever honor the enduring legacy of our matriarch.