

Brenda Barnard Hays

Brenda Barnard Hays, one of the first women to become probation and parole officers for the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, died peacefully early May 4, 2009, after living with cancer for more than 22 years. She was 67.

Brenda was born Feb. 11, 1942 in Baltimore, Md. The daughter of John and Wanda Barnard, she attended John Marshall High School in Oklahoma City. Upon earning a sociology degree at the University of Oklahoma in 1974, she joined the Department of Corrections and spent the majority of her career guiding felons. In between she worked in the Cleveland County Court Clerk's office and created guidelines for bail bondsmen at the Oklahoma Insurance Commission.

Throughout her life, her two children, Rob and Kristen, were her top priorities. She was a pragmatic, generous and loving single mother who put her own needs aside for theirs. She taught them the value of an education by her example of studying for her college degree while working full-time in the early 1970s. Without help, she ensured that her children were educated and launched their own careers.

Throughout her life, Brenda had a keen interest in antiques, particularly art glass. She became a self-taught antique dealer, combing for treasures in small towns in Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas.

In recent years after she retired, Brenda dedicated herself to easing the plight of feral cats. She was a member of Hands Helping Paws, a Norman group that traps feral cats to spay and neuter them and then release them to prevent unwanted litters of kittens. The group also finds homes for feral kittens young enough to be socialized into loving pets.

She is survived by her children; a granddaughter, Jenna; and many loving and supportive friends.

In lieu of flowers, please send donations in Brenda's name to Hands Helping Paws, P.O. Box 1024, Norman, OK, 73070.