Ruth Barkley Elmer, 86, went to be with her Lord and Savior on January 6, 2023. She was born in Olney, Illinois, to Kenneth Joseph Barkley and Mary Lovina (Richards) Barkley. She was a devoted Air Force wife, world traveler, beloved mother, P.E.O. sister, educator, and godly woman.

Ruth attended Newton Community High School where she held the office of class treasurer all four years and was valedictorian of her class. She performed as the vocalist with a band for high school prom, sang solos for several weddings, and sang for ladies' daytime club meetings with best friend Carol. She and Carol also recorded songs each week to be the lead-in for a local radio station's news program.

Ruth earned a degree in education from the University of Illinois. She belonged to Kappa Delta Pi (an honor society in education). She served as president of Concordia (a residence for female students) and was a member of the Women's Group System (a governing body of all the houses). She starred as the heroine in a televised drama at U. of I., officiated Watcheka Sing, and twice was a candidate for the University of Illinois Queen.

Ruth wore many hats over the years: she was a preschool and elementary school teacher in Texas, Japan, and Illinois; a classroom music director, a Mother's Day Out teacher and music leader, a Neighborhood Girl Scout Chairman, and a leader for several years in Girl Scout Day Camp. She served as president both in the P.E.O. Sisterhood in California and Arkansas, and once was Arkansas State Membership Committee Chairman. She was a member and secretary of the Bob Millett Bible Class at Lakewood United Methodist Church, a one-time chairman of the United Methodist Women's Circle, and a frequent church committee member. She served as a driver for Ozark Mission Project for seven summers. She was a Perpetual Hereditary Member of the Military Order of the World Wars and the driver to MOWW Youth Leadership Conferences in Oklahoma, Missouri, and Alabama.

Some of Ruth's remarkable experiences with her husband Jim included meeting U.S. President George H.W. Bush in the White House as part of a delegation from MOWW. Another time they visited with former President George H.W. and Barbara Bush (with their little white dog) on the deck of his U.S. Presidential Center in Houston, Texas. Years later, Ruth and Jim met and were photographed in the White House with Bush's son, President George W. Bush. Afterward, granddaughter Rebecca remarked, "Wow! What an honor for anyone to meet BOTH...of the Elmers!"

Among her many other distinctions, in 2019, Ruth was presented with a beautiful plaque by the Arkansas Secretary of State commending her volunteer service.

Ruth is survived by her **children**: Ken (Julie) Elmer of Birmingham, AL; Richard (Sherry) Elmer of North Little Rock, AR; Mary (Hugh) MacEachern of Taylor, MI; and Susan "Su" (Keaton) Smith of London, KY.

She is also survived by her **grandchildren**: LeighAnn Tufts of New York, NY; David (Laura) Elmer of Rome, GA; Charles "Chip" (Brittany) Elmer of Birmingham, AL; Logan Allen of Benton, AR; Rebecca (Francesco Bravi) Lyles of Rome, Italy; Will (Iris) Lyles of San Antonio, TX; Robert (Gloria) Lyles of Camp Pendleton, CA; Grant Lyles of Boston, MA; Alyn (Allyson) Smith of Lafayette, IN; Ken Smith, Mary Smith and FaithLynn Smith of Corbin, KY; her **great-grandchildren**: Elliot Elmer and Maggie Elmer of Rome, GA, and Micah Bahvy Elmer of Birmingham, AL; her **brother and sisters-in-law**: Bruce (Margaret) Barkley of Galesburg, IL, and Clare Barkley of Urbana, IL; her **brothers-in-law**: Wayne Elmer (friend MaryAnn Donovan) of Beloit, WI, and Robert (Diane) Elmer of Roscoe, IL; Clifton (Gloria) White of Beloit, WI, and Dale White of Monroe, WI; her **sisters-in-law**: Donna Dyer of Reedsburg, WI, and Karen (Tim) Schaeffer of Naples, FL; Ramona (Jim) Rabuck and Loretta (David) Thurman of Beloit, WI; and several nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Ruth is predeceased by her loving **husband** of 64 years, James "Jim" Elmer of North Little Rock, AR; her **parents**: Kenneth Barkley and Mary (Richards) Barkley; her **father- and mothers-in-law**: Lee Elmer, Violet (Stibbe) Elmer, and Faith Gearing; her **brothers-in-law**: Dick Elmer, Jack Elmer; Larry White, and Philip White; her **sisters-in-law**: infant, Doris Peterson, Sherry Banker, Carol Venrooy, and Rosie Grignon.

The funeral service celebrating the life of Ruth Elmer will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 14, 2023, at Lakewood United Methodist Church.

Interment will take place at 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 18, 2023, at the Arkansas State Veterans Cemetery.

In Memoriam:

In lieu of sending flowers, Ruth has requested that charitable donations be made.

To make a tax-deductible donation in Ruth's memory to P.E.O. International, checks should be made payable to the P.E.O. Foundation and mailed to the P.E.O. Foundation, 3700 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50312. Please enclose a note that your donation is in memory of Ruth Elmer, Chapter X, North Little Rock Arkansas.

To donate to Lakewood United Methodist Church, mail checks to 1922 Topf Road, North Little Rock, AR 72116.