

Bentley remembered for love of books

Brandi Peters
Staff Writer

Donna Bentley, a former librarian of the Wilson Library at the University of La Verne, died Jan. 19 at age 65.

She was born on May 17, 1957, to Baffrey “Pete” and Melba Bentley in Upland, California. She later moved to Ontario, California, where she graduated from Chaffey High School in 1975.

Ms. Bentley earned a bachelor’s degree in liberal studies from the University of California, Riverside, in 1979 and a master’s degree in library science from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 1981.

She is survived by her brothers, Baffrey Bentley of Harrington, Maine, and Charles Bentley of Dayton, Nevada.

She also has several nieces and nephews that she leaves behind. Ms. Bentley is preceded in death by her father and mother.

Ms. Bentley spent many years working as a librarian. Before working at the University of La Verne for 28 years, she worked at St. Mary’s College of Maryland, the University of North Carolina Greensboro, and the University of Nevada, Reno, before returning home to California to work as the children’s Librarian at the Ontario Public Library.

Then finally arriving at the University of La Verne, she would become very influential in how the library functions today.

Her influence would span regionally with programs such as the Campus Accelerated Program for Adults and resources for military programs.

“She took tremendous pride in what was built through the library and felt it was essential

in the University of La Verne moving from a college to a university,” Charles Bentley, Ms. Bentley’s younger brother and retired chief editorial and public relations director of the University of La Verne, said.

Ms. Bentley was very service-oriented and beloved by students, faculty, and staff. She was known for always being willing to lend a helping hand. She enjoyed teaching students and faculty how to utilize the library to its full potential. She was not just a librarian but a teacher who believed in the power of literacy and the importance of education.

“Donna Bentley was very dedicated to what she did in helping not only students but faculty as well,” Mike Laponis, communications emeritus professor of the University of La Verne, said.

Ms. Bentley’s belief in education led her to serve on several committees during her tenure at the University of La Verne. She invested her time in many local and state organizations to help with literacy programs throughout the community.

“Donna was a cat lover. She always had cats, she was smart, kind and generous,” Charles Bentley said.

Wayne Thurston, executive assistant and learning commons manager of the University of La Verne, said she was all in on staff bowling nights and loved every bit of it.

“Donna Bentley was very good at keeping us informed and putting things in front of us that were useful in our own research and our own teaching,” Laponis said. “I appreciated that about Donna.”

Ms. Bentley retired in 2020 from the University of La Verne as conferred professor emeritus.



Stephanie Arellanes

Former librarian Donna Bentley worked at the University of La Verne’s Wilson Library for 28 years. Her influence on the campus library in-

cluded work with the Campus Accelerated Program for Adults and resources for military programs.

She later purchased a home in a small town in Columbia Falls, Maine, to be closer to family. To many, she was considered the heart and soul of the library, very giving of herself and her time. She believed that helping others learn and gain access to information would help make the world better.

So, in place of flowers, the family asks that support be given to the expansion of literacy in children and adults by donating to a charity of your choice whose cause is education related or by spending time helping someone gain access to resources that could empower them to learn to read.

“She was an encyclopedia of knowledge,” Thurston said. “You could bring up any subject and she would know about it.”

A celebration of life will be held at noon March 10 in the Sacred Space of the Ludwick Center.

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Jashelle Ranson’s life celebrated by Leo family

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Jashelle Ranson, junior photography major, died unexpectedly Jan. 3. The news was released to the University of La Verne students and staff via email on Jan. 13 from Zandra Wagoner, interfaith chaplain.

Ranson was born on Nov. 17, 2002 to James and Quida Ranson and was the second of five children. Ranson’s family, friends and co-workers all gathered for a Celebration of Life on Jan. 24 at 6 p.m. in the Ludwick Center Sacred Space to share memories of Ranson and bring items that remind them of her like a jar of pickles, her favorite chips, Reese’s and flowers.

“We’re at this place, we are here to remember, honor and celebrate the life of Jashelle Ranson,” Wagoner said. “I want to acknowledge the heavy hearts

that are in this room, as well as the beauty of so many gathered to honor Jashelle’s life.”

Devorah Lieberman, University President, said that Ranson had a huge impact on campus due to how involved she was. Ranson was involved in cheer, was a residential adviser for a residence hall, worked at Bon Appetit, and was part of the ULV Campus Times photography staff.

“She was everywhere, physically and spiritually on this campus,” Lieberman said. “Our best way to honor Jashelle is to have her live through us in your deeds and the way you treat others as she treated each one of us.”

Mia Hernandez, a sophomore education major and Ranson’s best friend, said that Ranson was a very positive person who lived every moment to the fullest. She said Ranson was the definition of happiness, and could light up a room with her presence. Hernandez and Ranson were inseparable and were planning to move

in together once they graduated.

Hernandez said she will always remember Ranson for her love of pop singers Ariana Grande and Sabrina Carpenter, the color pink, her obsession with Chester’s Flamin’ Hot Fries, but mostly for who she was. Ranson was the funniest person she knew and never failed to put a smile on Hernandez’s face.

“Losing Jashelle has by far been one of the hardest things I’ve had to go through and it’s left me completely heartbroken,” Hernandez said. “To have lost her is like losing a limb, I feel like I’ve lost a piece of my soul.”

Hernandez remembered Ranson as her rock, the person she could relate to most. Hernandez said that to be in Ranson’s presence, you always felt safe, loved, and accepted.

“You were taken from us too soon. I will always remember our fun night outs together, our date nights, our inside jokes,

and literally every moment we shared,” Hernandez said. “I loved Jashelle like no other, and she was the best friend anyone could ask for. Not a second goes by when I don’t think of her.”

Kendall Stanley, a senior kinesiology major and another best friend of Ranson’s, said the two clicked instantly when they met last year. While the two were total opposites, Stanley said that whenever they hung out their differences disappeared and that the conversations were always great. Stanley called Ranson her number one supporter.

“Jashelle went above and beyond for her friends, through the good days and bad,” Stanley said. “Jashelle was a person with a big heart. Jashelle, you will be forever in our hearts.”

Brannon Andrews, community coordinator at Cal State Fullerton and Ranson’s supervisor, said they met when Andrews was a grad assistant and Ranson was an R.A. Andrews said that Ranson felt like a little sister and

remembered her for her beautiful personality and bouncy presence. The two would meet in the office where Andrews offered a listening ear and reassurance whenever Ranson needed it.

One thing that Hernandez, Stanley and Andrews all shared was that, for them, it was not a goodbye to Ranson, it was more of a “see you later.”

“We love her and we will continue to love her, honor her, (and) cherish her,” Andrews said.

Ranson’s photography can be seen on the Campus Times website and on her photography Instagram account @photosby-jashelle.

Ranson is survived by her father James, her mother Quida, her brother James Jr., and her sisters, Jada, Jaliah, and Jani Rose Ranson.

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