

Billy Joe "B.J." Taylor Tatum

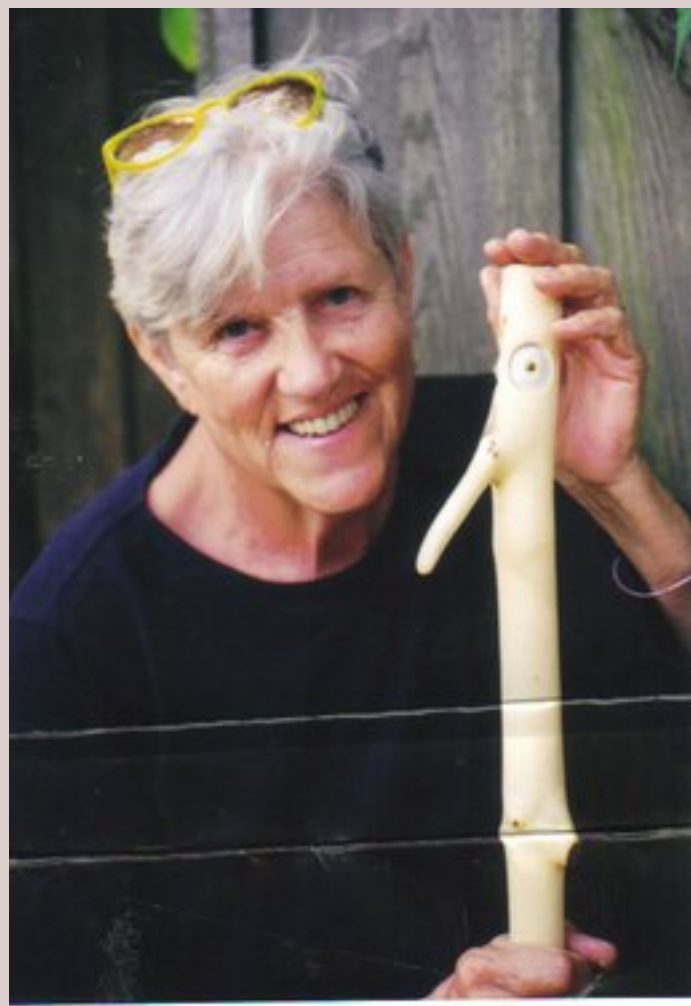
Birth: Feb. 15, 1932
Little Rock
Pulaski County
Arkansas, USA

Death: Mar. 26, 2012
Little Rock
Pulaski County
Arkansas, USA

Billy Joe Tatum of Melbourne, a nationally known wild foods authority. Acclaimed author. Gourmet chef and epicurean expert. International traveler. Unofficial ambassador to the world for Arkansas. Billy Joe Tatum was all of these things and more, but to those who knew her and loved her, she was simply "Billy" or just "B.J."

A beloved wife, sister, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and friend, Billy Joe passed away on March 26, 2012 at the age of 80. Born in Little Rock on February 15, 1932, Billy Joe and her family moved several times during her childhood due to her father's position as a Southern Baptist minister. She eventually graduated from Ozark High School and attended Ouachita Baptist University and the College of the Ozarks, where she studied music. In 1950 while attending Ouachita Baptist University, she met the love of her life, Harold "Hally" Tatum. The two were married in 1951 and began raising a family that would include four daughters and a son.

"Doc" Tatum opened his practice in Melbourne in Izard County in 1958, and Billy Joe took on the unpaid role of receptionist and medical assistant. The only physician in Izard County at the time, Hally made numerous house calls, assisted by Billy Joe. It was during these house calls to rural patients, many of whom paid their medical bills with game and wild foods, that Billy Joe began to appreciate the potential of natural fare and medicinal herbs. In 1970, she approached the publisher of the *The Ozarks Mountaineer*, a local publication that focused on arts and crafts, folklore and gardening, about writing a free-lance article on wild mushrooms, establishing a relationship that would continue for more than two decades. She wrote the *Mountaineer's* "Ozarks Cookery" column in the 1990s and collaborated with her sister, Ann Taylor Packer, on a book published by the magazine in 1987 entitled



Added by: [Barbara](#)



Added by: [Barbara](#)



Love you, mama. I miss you.
- [Angel Tatum Craddock](#)

Added: May. 16, 2012

"The Ozarks Collection: the Best Recipes From the Heritage and Traditions of a Storied Region."

Billy Joe's reputation as an expert on all things edible in the outdoors extended beyond Arkansas with the publication of her "Wild Foods Cookbook & Field Guide" in 1976. She would appear on "The Dinah Shore Show" and "The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson" to promote her book, still considered one of the finest of its kind ever published. Her lectures at the Smithsonian Institute, the Ozark Folk Center in Mountain View (where she served as the facility's "herb doctor" in the mid-'70s) and numerous colleges earned her a wealth of fans who saw her as a successor to Euell Gibbons, the author of "Stalking the Wild Asparagus."

A founding member of the Committee of 100, a group of volunteers responsible for promoting the Ozark Folk Center across the state, Billy Joe took her commitment to her work and her community very seriously. What little free time she had she devoted to seeking out thrift stores and yard sales, combing row after row of trinkets and novelty items to find bargains that she or someone she knew would come to treasure. BJ was a member of the First Baptist Church in Melbourne. She especially enjoyed her Sunday school class.

Her extensive knowledge of country living was matched only by her generous nature, with her home just outside of Melbourne a constant flurry of activity. Billy Joe was known to invite people she barely knew to spend the night in her home, with artists, musicians, dancers and writers passing time in the spacious three-story A-frame domicile she dubbed "Wildflower. Her expansive living room was constantly filled with visitors and an endless string of parties, one of which was featured in a 1979 article in People magazine. The party's guest list included then Gov. Bill Clinton and first lady Hillary Clinton as well as Winthrop Paul Rockefeller, who purchased the party at the Arkansas Arts Center's semiannual Tabriz auction the year before.

Billy Joe's later years saw her travel abroad numerous times with family and friends, visiting locations such as Scotland, Germany, England, Eastern Europe, Greece, Costa Rica, Thailand and Ireland. She is survived by her husband, Dr. Harold Tatum, her brothers, Dr. Jack Taylor of Flagstaff, Ariz., and Ira Taylor of

Miami Beach, Fla., and her sister, Sammy Denhoff of Chula Vista, Calif., as well as her children, Angel Craddock of Nashville, Tenn., and her husband Michael; Lisa Tatum of Maumelle; Lori Purtle of Melbourne and her husband, John; Maury White Quo of Little Rock and her husband, Geoff; and Toby Tatum of Lake Village, AR. She is also survived by 9 grandchildren (Rory Abraham, Maggie and Nick Bruner, Larissa and Caleb Purtle, Nic and Zac Tatum, and Emma and Annie Quo) and 5 great grandchildren (Violet and Sacnite Abraham, Matthew Englehardt, and Micah and Clara Bruner) and numerous nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, W.O. and Minnie Belle Taylor; her sisters, Ann Taylor Packer and Idavonne Rosa; and her brothers, Orville Taylor and James Taylor.

The family would like to thank the staff and doctors at UAMS and Arkansas Hospice for their excellent care of Billy Joe during the last week. Also, many thanks to Dr. Bob Walton for his care and friendship to BJ over the years.

Billy Joe will certainly be missed by all those who were fortunate enough to know such an interesting and dynamic woman. She was definitely one of a kind.

A celebration honoring Billy Joe will be held Saturday, April 7, at First Baptist Church in Melbourne at 1 p.m. Friends and family are welcome at Wildflower after the service. In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the Manna House Food Pantry, Box 344, Melbourne, Ark. 72556 (870) 368-7111.

Published: March 30, 2012 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Burial:
Cremated, Other.

Created by: [Barbara](#)
Record added: Apr 19, 2012
Find A Grave Memorial# 88789899