It’s not hard to imagine Wesley A. Bentley and Juanice Blakeley Bentley as a young, happy couple when viewing their photo, where they are seen holding each other in a loving embrace, yet it is hard to comprehend how their lives would later be stricken with tragedy which would tear them away from their hopes and dreams on earth.

Wesley and Juanice Bentley were both raised in Abilene, Texas, attended Abilene Christian College and were married on January 20, 1929. Wesley became a successful salesman for a national insulation company, eventually moving them to Charlotte, North Carolina, while Juanice became a loving mother to five beautiful children. Soon after the United States had entered World War II and Americans were working hard to make ends meet, as they recovered from The Great Depression, everything seemed to only get worse for Mr. and Mrs. Bentley. On July 18, 1942, 34 year-old Wesley Bentley died suddenly from a heart attack – “a defective heart valve” as his death certificate reads. At the time, his youngest child, Judy, was only four days old.

Soon after Mr. Bentley’s death, tragedy struck again when Mrs. Bentley, then a single mother of five children, was told she had incurable cancer. In an effort to try to help his daughter, Malcolm Blakeley, who his grandchildren affectionately called “Pappy,” lived with the tragedy-stricken family while Juanice began searching for a place for her five children to live. Juanice’s mother had passed away several years earlier, yet she was fortunate to have Pappy help her through this unimaginable situation.

Coming out of the great depression, no family was readily willing to raise someone else’s five children, but there were offers by Abilene Christian College President Don H. Morris and his wife Alberta to take the two youngest children, while aunts and uncles offered to take each of the remaining children. However, it was Juanice’s desire for all of her children to grow up together that led her to J.B. McGinty, who at the time was serving on the ACC Board of Trustees and had previously served on the board for Boles Home. He told Juanice about Boles Home, a place that would forever change the lives of this broken family.

It was a difficult day in 1944, when the family boarded a train from Charlotte to Terrell, Texas, whisking them away to their new home – Boles Home. Juanice Bentley died ten days later in a Dallas hospital at the age of 33. At the time, her daughter LuGene was 13, Patty (10), Wesley (8), Tommy (3) and Judy was less than 2 years old. As a dying wish of young Juanice
Bentley, Pappy promised to move near the children and stay close by until they graduated from high school. Four of the children immediately began living at Boles, but because of her young age, little Judy first went to live with her grandfather’s niece in Dallas, whom she knew as “Aunt Blanche.” It wasn’t long before Pappy could see that Aunt Blanche was becoming too attached to Judy, so he felt it necessary to uphold Juanice’s desire for her children to grow up together and he insisted that the baby of the family join the rest of her siblings at Boles Home. Pappy lived near the campus, and the children got to see him occasionally. They often sat with him during church services that were held directly across the street from Boles Home. “It was comforting to us to know that Pappy was always nearby,” remembers Judy. Mr. Blakeley showed great commitment in fulfilling his promise to be near the children. In September of 1966, only six years after the last child left Boles Home, Pappy passed away.

The five Bentley children spent many years growing up together at Boles Home, where they certainly left their mark as wonderful examples and were loved by their extended Boles Home family.
LuGene Bentley Lewis

LuGene Bentley was 13 years old when she arrived at Boles and she spent several years there before graduating from high school. During her senior year, Boles Home published a story and photos of LuGene and her youngest sister, Judy. The story told about Judy entering into the first grade while LuGene would soon be attending Abilene Christian College. This photo created love at first sight for a young man in Midlothian, Texas who saw his parents’ copy of the newsletter lying on the table at his home. When Roy Lewis saw LuGene’s picture, he cut it out, put it in his billfold and decided to find her when he returned to Abilene Christian College. LuGene never knew about this until after they married and Roy pulled the picture out of his billfold. Roy and LuGene were married in the Boles Home Church in 1950, and they enjoyed 57 years of marriage until his death in 2007. They have four children (one of whom passed away in 1999), twelve grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. LuGene has always been actively involved with her church and community. She is a past president of the Abilene Postal Clerks Women’s Auxiliary and the American Business Women’s Association. She is currently a member of the Kiwanis Club of Abilene and has been a porcelain artist since 1968. LuGene currently resides in Abilene.

Patty Bentley Jones

Patty Bentley arrived at Boles Home when she was 10 years old. While at Boles, Patty enjoyed being in the Bel Canto Chorus and singing in the sextet. After graduation, Patty attended Abilene Christian College where she met Gerald Harvey Jones. They married on August 26, 1954, at Boles Home and moved to Denton where Gerald continued his education at North Texas State University while Patty worked to support them. After Gerald graduated, they moved to Austin, where Gerald began teaching Industrial Arts to junior high students. Gerald began showing an interest in oil painting, so Patty purchased Gerald’s first set of paints, brushes and canvases for his birthday. Little did anyone know that Patty and her gift would inspire Gerald to become one of the most famous living painters of his time. Gerald, who signs his art as G. Harvey, is a celebrated impressionist whose work has been recognized worldwide. Patty and Gerald have two children and four grandchildren. Patty, who in many ways is the woman and inspiration behind a great artist, is also known for being a fabulous cook and a natural at arranging flowers and beautifying her home. Patty and Gerald continue to live in Fredericksburg, Texas.
Wesley Bentley was 8 years old when he moved to Boles Home. While at Boles, like most boys, he raised pigs. “I bought a pig from Wesley and I raised many litters, making enough money to get me started in college,” remembers Randy Nicholson, Arms of Hope board member and former Boles resident. After graduation, Wesley attended Harding College in Searcy, Arkansas for 2 years. While there he met and married Wanda Ladean Croft and then enlisted in the U. S. Air Force, where he spent twenty years, rising to the rank of master sergeant. He had many exciting assignments including Okinawa, Japan; Rota, Spain; and Germany. After his retirement from the Air Force, he canoed in Alaska down the Chatanika River and built a log cabin in a clearing, where he has lived to this day. Wesley has three sons, one daughter and ten grandchildren. Several of his children followed in his footsteps by having successful military careers. Also, his son, Wes, founded mission efforts in Sudan, Uganda, Kenya and Malaysia. Another son, Jon, founded a mission outreach program to take care of special needs orphans in Ethiopia and Cambodia, while also working with other Christian groups to combat Cambodian human trafficking. Wesley’s Christian legacy is certainly evident in the lives of his children.

Tommy Bentley

Tommy Bentley was only 3 years old when he arrived at Boles, where he was placed in the nursery. After a few years, he moved into the little boys’ dormitory and later graduated to the big boys’ dormitory. All the Boles Home children had daily chores to do. During Tommy’s teenage years, his chores included milking cows, slopping pigs and hauling hay. He also sang in the Bel Canto Chorus and in the summer, the choir traveled and sang at Churches of Christ in the southwestern states. “We really enjoyed traveling and singing, but one of the reasons for being in the choir during the summer was that you didn’t have to milk cows, slop pigs, and haul hay,” recalls Tommy. Tommy was active in the FFA (Future Farmers of America) during his high school years, and was on the track team for the Boles Home Hornets. His sophomore year, Tommy was voted most popular boy. Tommy recalls how he and many of the boys picked cotton to earn pocket change. Tommy remembers an annual tradition at Boles when the kids packed on the bed of a cattle truck and were taken to the State Fair of Texas in Dallas and they took peanut butter sandwiches and apples for a snack. Tommy left the home at the end of his Junior year and finished high school in Abilene and then enrolled in Abilene Christian College. In 1960, after his Freshman year at ACC, Tommy enlisted in the United States Air Force and after basic training and technical school, he was stationed at Dyess Air Force Base and then married JoAnn Valentine. After leaving the Air Force, Tommy began his career in civil service at Dyess AFB as a Labor Relations Officer and he retired in 1994. Tommy has been singing with a country western band for the last 13 years and lives in Clyde, Texas. Tommy and JoAnn have two children and four grandchildren.
Judy Bentley Mayo

Judy Bentley was 22 months old when she arrived at Boles. Her early years were spent in the nursery where she remembers Miss Pittman, the matron, who would rock her to sleep at naptime. Although the girls were kept on one side of the nursery while the boys were on the other, Tommy was in the nursery at the same time as Judy. When Judy was 7, she moved to the little girls’ dorm. At 10, she moved to an upstairs dorm and then at 13, she moved to the big girls’ dorm where she stayed until she left for college. Judy joined the Bel Canto Chorus when she was 12. “I loved traveling throughout the country singing with the chorus. We would sing for churches that supported the home, stay with members of the churches, then travel on the bus to the next town and sing for another church,” remembers Judy. Judy graduated from Boles High School in 1960, and then left for Abilene Christian College. She loved her new life filled with new friends and was happy to be near LuGene and Tommy who lived in Abilene at the time. “I loved dorm life. I was certainly accustomed to it, having lived in dorms all my life,” stated Judy. During the first month at ACC, Judy met her husband, Bud Mayo. After dating for two years, they were married at Boles Home in 1962. They moved to Houston where Judy completed her education to become a registered nurse while Bud worked for Southwestern Bell. They spent ten years in Houston before Southwestern Bell transferred them to Austin and Katy. They eventually ended up in Fredericksburg, where they have been for the last eighteen years and currently live today. Bud and Judy have two daughters and six grandchildren. Judy is the Fredericksburg Independent School District nurse. She has been a member of the Lions Club for eighteen years and has served as president twice, helping get glasses for children who were not able to afford them. She has enjoyed serving those in need during medical mission trips and is actively involved in prison ministry efforts all across Texas, giving inmates hope through Christ.

“Our early years at a children’s home might seem less than pleasant to the outside world, who had normal childhood experiences with parents, but we have been blessed abundantly, and feel that God was totally with us through the years spent at Boles Home,” explains Judy Bentley Mayo.

God blessed these five lives with hope at Boles Home.