

Photo courtesy of Bill MacManus



Photo Courtesy of Pam MacManus Burton

Thelma Lanell Crawford MacManus 1921 - 2004

My brother, Bill called this morning to say that my mother had passed away. She was born in Arley, Texas and raised in Olton, north of Lubbock. She grew up during the depression, saying that it was a good place to spend those hard years, because everyone was in the same situation.

Her parents, Jack and Nellie May Crawford, separated when she was in her teens and she lived in Olton with her mother until she went away to college at Texas Tech in Lubbock. While in Lubbock, she met Joe MacManus, a young Army aviator going through flight training at Reese Field on his way to the war in Europe. A short time later they were married and, like so many of their generation, they spent the first years of their marriage separated by a world at war.

Dad returned from the war unharmed and they spent some time traveling around among his air force bases. She told stories of living on a shoe string in Sulfur Springs, Florida where the water tasted hideously like the town's namesake. A favorite pastime was to go to the drugstore / bus-station during the summer and watch the bus arrive. The hot and weary travelers would disembark and hurry up to the soda fountain, asking for a glass of water. Mom said that just as they got the glass under their nose, they could smell it and would look a little startled, but then they took a big gulp of the water, which tasted like rotten eggs. Then they would be momentarily lost in confusion over whether to swallow and risk nausea or spit it out and stay hot and thirsty. After discharge from the Army, Dad used his GI Bill and enrolled in the journalism school of the University of Missouri. (He was from St. Louis.) Because of all of the married veterans attending U of M, there was a trailer-park for the student couples where they lived while he was in school. It was while they lived here that I was born.

After graduation, they moved to Lubbock near her

mother. Dad worked in advertising sales for the Lubbock paper, the Avalanche-Journal. They built a home on a VA loan and Mom kept house and raised me, and after 1950, my sister Pam.

In 1955 the family moved to Dallas where there were more opportunities and a more cosmopolitan environment. My brother Bill was born shortly after arriving in Dallas and about 1960, Joe and Thel bought the home where they would spend the rest of their lives. As the children got old enough, Mom looked at returning to work. She went back to school at SMU to get her teacher certification and then taught elementary education, going on to help the Dallas ISD develop its first program for learning challenged children. Later she also worked in office management, but her primary focus was her marriage, her home and her family. All of her children were sent to college.

The children moved on, establishing families of their own. Over the years the home was renovated, Dad changed careers, serving as advertising manager for the Dallas Chamber of Commerce and retiring from GE finance. Dad passed away in 1987.

Like so many of our generation, Bill, Pam and I all divorced. It was fortunate for Mom that Bill and Pam were able to live with and care for her as she got older, but ultimately, after a broken hip, she moved to a beautiful assisted living facility near Dallas' White Rock Lake, which she loved. She lived there for her last few months until she passed away, with Pam and Bill in attendance.

Thel Crawford MacManus was a tall, beautiful, intelligent woman with a fierce pride and an infectious laugh. Her creativity and love of the English language gave birth to and nurtured my own. The deep and lifelong love she shared with my father showed me a beacon and a standard. She has rejoined God and my father. May she be blessed and find peace.

Pat MacManus, August 19, 2004