



Betty Raysor – 104 Years a Homemaker

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Betty Sturrock Raysor was born on Dec. 8, 1908, celebrating her 104th birthday last Saturday with her daughter Evelyn and great-granddaughter Heather. In spirit or by phone, others were present too, three granddaughters, two grandsons, sixteen great-grandchildren, and numerous great-great-children. Betty is affectionately known as “Nana” or “Grand Mommie.” She can still play the piano a bit.

Betty grew up in Sunny Dell, near Colmesneil. “The old church house and school are still there,” said Evelyn.

The year 1908 saw the first long-distance radio message sent from the Eifel Tower, the first major oil field discovered in the Middle East, Henry Ford’s first Model T, and Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid were gunned down in Bolivia.

Betty survived polio at five years old and was six years old when WWI broke out, the same year her mother died. When Betty was 14, her father was struck by lightning and died; that was 1922, two years into Prohibition, and the Roaring Twenties were bustling as science and manufacturing took off.

Orphaned at 14, Betty went to live with her uncle, Dr. Johnny Martin, in Beaumont. Doctors still made house calls back then.

She married Ernest Wolfram in Beaumont and had two daughters, Evelyn and Joyce. Evelyn said, “Those were good days. We fished on the coast a lot.” Then a pipe fell on Betty’s husband and they had to move to Galveston with his parents. When he recuperated, he went to work for Negley Paint Company in San Antonio. When their daughters grew up and left, Betty and Ernest parted ways.

WWII caught them by surprise. They had gone to the Cumberland Presbyterian Church that Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, and a 12-year-old girl ran up and told them, “The Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor! The Japs have bombed Pearl Harbor!”

Until that time, like most of the nation, they had not known where Pearl Harbor was. As WWII progressed, Betty and her two daughters remember well the rationing. They got rationing books that they had to use to buy sugar, meat, coffee, and more. They had to save their grease and even save toothpaste tubes. Several of Evelyn and Joyce’s classmates were killed.



After the war, Betty met Allen Laird “Al” Raysor in San Antonio and they tied the knot. He worked for the Civil Service.

Betty loved to decorate and keep house – she was a homemaker. Evelyn and Joyce remembered how their mother set them to the task of cutting out photos of apples from magazines in order to decorate the kitchen.

Cleanliness was next to Godliness. “Wash your hands,” Betty would tell them. She always wanted her children and her house clean.

Al retired in 1974 and they moved to Woodville. Al became a disk jockey for the radio station.

“Momma used to cook the meals right here,” Evelyn said as she patted her dining room table. Fried chicken, corn on the cob, potato salad. Every Friday night – pay day – they had steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, and tomato salad. And often homemade cottage cheese.

Al Raysor got the City of Woodville to correct the spelling of their street, from “Beach” to “Beech,” since there was no sandy beach and most other streets were named after trees, and, doubtlessly, the street was meant to be named after the beech trees so common to Woodville.

Betty has refused to accept the metric system and dislikes the reporting of temperature in Celsius. “Who in the world cares about Celsius?” Betty said. “This is the United States. We don’t want the Metric system.” And Betty wanted the time the same all over the U.S. too.

Betty’s great-grandson Derek Price reflected how they would gather at her house. “We would watch her play the electric organ or listen to rolls on the player piano. Her love of music is something she passed down to lots of people. I know her daughter Joyce, granddaughter Karen, great-grandson (myself) and great-great-granddaughter Miranda can all trace part of their love for the piano back to Betty. For a small child, her back yard was incredible! It felt like a magical wonderland with a forest of giant bamboo trees and fully packed greenhouse that she and Al spent so much time caring for.”

Al got very ill in the 1990s and asked Betty’s daughter Evelyn to come and live with them, to help them, and Evelyn has been with him and her mother ever since. Often Betty’s granddaughters or great-granddaughters will drop in and help.

Humor has filled their family, even in the rough times.

When Al was in the hospital, he would joke. One time, he heard a noise, wiggled out of bed and peeked around the curtain. The nurse said, “What are you doing?” He replied, “Just wanted to see if you wanted to dance.”

As things got worse, Evelyn remembers clearly Al’s last hours. They were in the hospital and all were telling jokes, one after another. Then Al told one last joke.

“An older couple were driving down the lane one day that they used to go down when they were young,” said Al. “The wife replied, ‘I remember when we used to sit side by side as we drove along.’ And the husband said, ‘I have not moved.’” It was so funny. And then Al died.

Perhaps Betty’s great-granddaughter Angel Price Hildreth said it best, “She is a very loving and kind-spirited woman who has faced every challenge in her life with a brave and positive attitude. She definitely will leave a long-lasting legacy of bravery, kindness and love of her friends and family.”