



Jean Tracy Palmer

November 10, 2019

Jean Tracy Palmer

April 6, 1921 — November 10, 2019

Jean Palmer was a nurse by training, an involved mother by choice, and a business executive by tragedy.

Leora Jean Tracy Palmer (98), died Sunday, November 10th at her residence in Austin, Texas. Her funeral will be held at 2:30 pm on November 15th at Kreidler Funeral Home of McAllen. A visitation will be held from 6:00 – 8:00 pm on Thursday, November 14th also at Kreidler Funeral Home.

Jean Palmer was born on April 6, 1921, in Smith Center, Kansas, then the geographical center of the United States (its only claim to fame). In 1924 her family moved to Donna, Texas, where her father and grandfather brought land parties of new settlers to the Rio Grande Valley selling them land and citrus orchards. Jean shared stories of her family crossing the Red River in an open touring car while a horse drawn cart followed across the river with their luggage. She recounted of that time, “The depression years were hard as I look back, but others were in similar circumstances, so life was quite good.”

Jean was 12 when she met Gamble Palmer from Pharr, Texas. She loved singing in her church and glee club at Donna High School from which she graduated at the age of 16 aspiring to join the nursing profession. To gain employment before she was old enough to begin nursing school, she was hired as a bookkeeper for a local dime store. She taught herself bookkeeping by studying past accounting transactions of the last bookkeeper. In 1939, she applied to and was accepted to the School of Nursing at the Jeff Davis Hospital in Houston. When World War II began, Gamble Palmer enlisted in the Navy Seabees as World War II began. Jean and Gamble married in 1942 but had to keep their marriage a secret at the time as it was against the rules for nursing students to be married. Gamble’s unit deployed to the South Pacific, and upon graduation, Jean moved to the Valley to work at Edinburg Hospital. The War caused a shortage in stateside medical help, and she was always very proud that a doctor, another nurse and she ran the Edinburg Hospital.

In 1945, the couple’s first child, Pamela Kaye, was born. The War ended soon thereafter, Gamble returned home, and in 1946 the family grew when a second daughter, Sandra

Louise, was born. The family moved to the Rio Grande Valley and then in 1951, they were blessed with a third child, Gamble Palmer, Jr. (Jay).

Two years later, Jean and Gamble started and built Palmer Building Supplies and Specialties and years later, Palmer Steel Supplies. Jean worked alongside Gamble for the first 5 years. Gamble would often joke about having to fire his wife after the first 5 years. The truth of the matter is that Jean made a decision to spend her time devoted to her children during their formative years. She delved into PTA, Brownies, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Junior Service League, Slipper Club, LOLITS (Little Old Ladies in Tennis Shoes), a Founding Member of the Board of the Tower Club in McAllen, a member of the Vannie Cook Cancer Treatment Center, sports, the Hidalgo County Child Welfare Board, the P.E.O. Sisterhood, and assisting with office work at St. Mark's United Methodist Church, later joining First United Methodist Church. She served McAllen as a loyal, hardworking "good will ambassador" during the time that her husband served as a director of the Chamber of Commerce and later as a McAllen City Commissioner. They would enjoy caravanning with McAllen friends to various cities in Mexico and reciprocated by hosting the sister cities at their own house.

When her husband and former McAllen City Commissioner, Gamble J. Palmer, Sr., died in a car-train accident in 1974, Jean immediately took on leadership of Palmer Building Supplies and Specialties, Palmer Steel Supplies, and Palmer Enterprises while also juggling the new title of grandmother. Jean provided hands on management in all of the family businesses. She was a responsible executive, and a whiz at organization, paperwork, legal issues, and accounting. She honed those skills on the job while recognizing that the companies had excellent employees who could take care of the day-to-day operations. She later ventured into real estate development with her son. Some of the most notable of these projects were Country Club Terrace Subdivision, Park Place Medical Development, and Jackson/Palmer Crossing Shopping Center in McAllen.

Away from business, she was a crack shot who enjoyed white wing dove hunting, offshore fishing off the coast of South Padre Island or, her favorite, surf fishing. It is acknowledged that no one could fry up fresh fish like Jean Palmer who guarded her secret recipe. At one time, Jean was a champion golfer at the McAllen Country Club. She had a passion for Texas Longhorn football and for several years could be found sitting in her reserved chair at DKR Memorial Stadium for all home games. She also enjoyed attending many San Antonio Spurs basketball games and rarely missed watching their televised games.

Mrs. Palmer was a highly skilled gin rummy player, but her passion was bridge where she attained the level of Life Master. Whenever her children spotted a delicious dessert in the refrigerator, they knew there would be a bridge party at the house that night. Like all true Southern women, Mrs. Palmer had a secret pleasure, one that she rarely shared with her local friends. She was as expert at shooting craps as she was at shooting white wing doves. She once held the dice at a table in Las Vegas for such a long period that the

croupier brought her a chair to sit in when he realized her back was beginning to bother her. She continued her roll from that sitting position for quite some time afterwards. In 1999, Jean and her children suffered another heartbreak when her daughter, Sandra died. In 2007, following the moves of both of her remaining children, Jean moved to Austin, where she became an active resident of a retirement home in Westlake Hills. During those years, she enjoyed watching her seven grandchildren grow and marry, and was very proud to say that she had 17 great-grandchildren with another expected in March, 2020. Next May, her first great-great-grandchild is expected. She was especially excited that a new generation of her family was to be born.

Besides her husband, Mrs. Palmer was preceded in death by a daughter, Sandra Palmer Thompson (Jim); her parents, Clarence Leroy and Mamie Huntington Tracy; two sisters, Betty Tracy Sharp and Doris Tracy Mayfield; and two brothers, Albert Leroy Tracy and Charles Alvin Tracy.

Survivors include a daughter, Pamela Palmer Van Sicklen (Mike) of Austin; a son, Gamble J. "Jay" Palmer Jr. (Martha) of Austin; seven grandchildren, Charles Jeffrey Crawford, Jeanene Crawford Cady, Jennifer Thompson Szutz, Palmer Allen Thompson, Gamble J. Palmer III, Gregory Wayne Palmer, and Priscilla Palmer Oberle; and 17 great-grandchildren, Andrew Ryan Tyndall, Robert Palmer Tyndall, Lindsey Pamela Tyndall, James Cole Yarto, Roberto Stefano Yarto, Palmer Sandon Yarto, Mia Daniella Yarto, Peyton Blythe Yarto, Megan Danielle Crawford, Katelyn Alyssa Crawford, Gamble Brock Palmer, Charles David Palmer, Paisley Joy Palmer, Ryan Grace Oberle, Joseph Benjamin Oberle, Sloane Ellen Oberle, and George Thatcher Oberle.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that contributions in Jean T. Palmer's memory be made to Wounded Warrior Project, POBox 758516, Topeka, KS 66675-8516 or Vannie E. cook Jr. Children's Cancer Clinic, 101 W. Expressway 83, McAllen 78503.

Visitation will be Thursday November 14, 2019 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM at Kreidler Funeral Home. Funeral service will be Friday November 15, 2019 2:30 PM at Kreidler Funeral Home.

The family wishes to express their extreme gratitude to the personnel at Brookdale Westlake Hills for all their love and kindnesses, and most especially to La Quinta Banks, Charlotte Mack, Denise Easdon and Maria Vasquez.

Events

NOV **Visitation** 06:00PM - 08:00PM

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Kreidler Funeral Home, Inc.
314 N 10th St., McAllen, TX, US, 78501

NOV **Funeral Service** 02:30PM

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