

Martha Pauline Keath | 1911-2014

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Martha Pauline Keath

Martha Pauline Keath, 103, a retired art teacher, died Tuesday, July 1, 2014, in Nocona.

Funeral is 2 p.m. Saturday, July 5, at First United Methodist Church in Boyd with burial at Boyd Cemetery. Visitation is noon to 2 p.m. Saturday prior to the service.

The Rev. J.D. Allen will officiate, and pallbearers will be Perry Jennings, Paul Jennings, Travis Keath, Colby Keath, Matthew Keath and John Jennings. Honorary pallbearers are Jerry Russel Keath, Edwin Lee Keath, Kathy Keath Lewis, Jim Keath and Jay Hamm.

Martha was born April 29, 1911, to Paul and Willie (Hickman) Smith in Haslet, the only girl and the oldest of four siblings. In her early life, she traveled in a wagon, women could not vote and things like electricity and indoor plumbing had not yet arrived. Her father was a road-builder, and she tended to her siblings and the horses. Later, her family settled in Cotulla.

Martha remembers the church bells tolling to celebrate the end of World War I. She was something of a tomboy and loved playing baseball and shooting her guns and riding horses. In 1935, Grady Forbes Keath sent Martha a telegram saying he was coming to pick her up and they would be married. They married in July 1935, and Grady took her to Boyd where he was the agriculture teacher.

Martha settled in and began a family that included three boys and a girl. She sewed all the clothes, washed them on a washboard and ironed them. She made butter, cheese, quilts and soap and canned all the food Grady grew. Martha cleaned house without a vacuum cleaner or Windex and raised her children.

Although she loved her family, this life did not satisfy her. Martha was very smart and a gifted artist. She wanted an education, and when her children were old enough to care for themselves, she enrolled in Arlington State College (now UTA), Texas Woman's University and finally North Texas State (now UNT) where she earned a master's degree in art. She taught art in the Fort Worth schools.

Martha became the adored Memaw to seven boys and one girl. She was loving, kind and patient, but maybe more important, she was curious, intelligent and pursued her love of art with a passion. Memaw's grandchildren were blessed by her love, but they were doubly blessed by the example of a person creating the life she wanted, using her talents and gifts as she saw fit.

Through trials and tribulations, Martha responded by learning to be happy anyway. When Grady died in 1983, she sold the house, donated the land for a senior citizens center, sold more land for an elementary school and built a new house. She finally had a chance to be an artist full time, and her output was prodigious with family, friends, church and the community all benefiting from her talent.

In her 90s, Martha moved to Nocona to be near her daughter. She bought her own home and lived by herself, happily painting until the age of 99 when she broke her hip. She then moved to the Cherry Street Assisted Living Community.

Martha was preceded in death by her parents; her husband; and three brothers.

She is survived by her daughter, Betty Jennings and husband, Wayne, of Ringgold; sons Walton Earl Keath and wife, Sonia, of Arlington, Edwin Paul Keath and wife, Mary, of Dayton, Md., and Adrin S. Keath of Nocona; grandchildren Kathy Keath Lewis, Perry Jennings, Paul Jennings, Travis Keath, Colby Keath, Jerry Russel Keath, Edwin Lee Keath, Kathy Keath Lewis, Jenny Gibson and Jim Keath; eight great-grandchildren; one great-great-granddaughter; and extended family and friends.