



Thelma Jones Milam October 11, 1925 – January 8, 2012

Thelma Milam was born in Denison, Texas. By her account the year used for her birth is incorrect. "My mother put my age up so I could go to school." In reality, Thelma hated to be labeled. She was whatever age suited her. "Age is nothing but a number." She'd say with a laugh or "A Lady doesn't mention her age." So, we will just keep her secret and smile.

Thelma was something else! She was a great storyteller, a keeper of culture and traditions for our family. She was "Miss Lucy" to all her grand and great-grandchildren, often reciting an old rhyme about the enigmatic "Lady with the alligator purse."

As a teenager she was THE best drum major/band leader at Terrell High School. Folks came from far and near to see her do her thing! She often recounted how she met our father, Walter, her husband of nearly 60 years. "He was captain of the football team and all the girls ran after him, but not me." They'd argue over the facts of the encounter, but never the ultimate goal. They married and had their first child Wanda before he was later drafted into the Navy.

Thelma and their baby daughter moved from Texas to California in what was known as the Great Migration. On his return they settled in Richmond, California and raised six children in a home that became the hub of family activities. The Milam house was a way-station for all those who came from the south to settle in the west. They were greeted with Thelma's warmth, kindness, words of wisdom and Walter's Bar-b-Que!

Thelma was a devoted Jehovah's Witness. She looked forward to her Meetings, Bible studies and Assemblies, and was a beloved mother to the "Friends" at the Hall. She had a green thumb and loved all types of flowers although bougainvilleas and gladiola's were her favorites. Her backyard was filled with fruit trees and we looked forward to her homemade plum jelly each year. We will also miss her yeast rolls and big cookies.

She was an avid camera buff and could do more with a zoom lens than a professional photographer. She rarely left home without a camera, chronicling important events for her congregation, family vacations and gatherings. Whether taking pictures of her flowers in the back yard, flying kites or playing games like "red light-green light" with her grand and great-grand children she was always active, boasting of being able to do the splits until last year! She always carried candy and mints in her purse never quelling the kid in her. She had a sweet tooth!

Thelma lived on her own until a month before her death, phoning family and friends each day. Throughout her life Mom was a source of inspiration to all and used her down-to-earth wisdom to encourage family and friends. "You've got to roll with the punches and flop with the mop!" She not only gave good advice she lived a good meaningful life and taught us all to do the same.

She remained strong in the face of adversity, sickness, the loss of her husband Walter, her eldest daughter Wanda, granddaughter Lisa and grandson Stephen.

She taught us how to live and on Sunday, January 8, 2012 she showed us how a Lady exits this life.

She leaves to mourn her passing, her loving children: Lorraine Milam of Oakland, Walter [Lorie] H. Milam, Jr. of Richmond, Gwen [Keith] Francis-Williams of Stockton, Shelley Milam-Milford of Eureka, and Kimberley of Bay Point. Siblings: Marie Roberts of Fort Worth, Texas and Florence [Earnest] Fridia of Richmond; with Charles, Wendell, Ruby Jewel, Irma Jean and Dorothy preceding her in death. Grandchildren: Eric, Michelle, Aisha, Erica, Gabrielle, Ashley, Ray, Andre, Aviana, Alycia. Great-grandchildren: Charnay, Alexander, Jasmine, Kimora, Amia, and a host of nephews, nieces, cousins, sister-in-laws, dear friends and neighbors. We honor our mother's memory by adhering to all her wishes.