



Betty Lou Connor

June 11, 1926 - December 28, 2020

Some people are born to a place, settle in and spend their lives in that one place.

Betty Lou Connor was not one of those people.

From a modest childhood in Nebraska, Betty and her brood forged a vibrant life of family, travel, adventures and service.

Born into the Roaring 20s near Lincoln, Nebraska to Frederick Warner and Catherine Preis, Betty's early years were profoundly influenced by both the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. Her father was killed by a plough horse when Betty was but 2 years old, leaving her mother to raise Betty, her older brother Fritz and sister Barbara. They eventually settled on acreage near Omaha, wherein the Warner family grew to include sister Donna and brother Jim. It was all hands on-deck to make a living in Depression-era Nebraska and at one point Catherine and family even turned to breeding, raising and selling pigeons to make ends meet. No, not carrier pigeons, these pigeons were for the restaurant market.

Betty's experiences with dust and pigeons didn't help to keep her down on the farm. After graduating from high school, and a brief vocational experiment as "Rosie the Riveter" (she quickly decided that there were more qualified Rosies), Betty packed her steamer trunk and booked the train to San Francisco where she took a typist position for the US Army at Fort Mason.

In addition to her secretarial duties, Betty was drafted into the military's floating Welcome Wagon, wherein young women boarded boats and sailed into San Francisco Bay to greet returning WWII soldiers and sailors as they passed under the Golden Gate bridge on their return from the Pacific theater.

There, while working as a typist for the Army, Betty was assigned to a Lieutenant Ralph Owen Connor (formerly of La Grande, Oregon).

The rest as they say is history.

Betty and Ralph married in 1946 and began a lifelong love affair. As her granddaughter Kelly recalled, Ralph (whom Betty always called Connor) “was her moon, sun and stars”.

Of course, the Pentagon had other duties for Betty’s moon, sun and stars and Ralph received orders for post-war Japan—but in 1947 Japan, dependents were not permitted. So, a soon-to-be-expecting Betty returned to Nebraska to live with her mother in Omaha until Ralph returned.

The next generation of Connors debuted when Betty gave birth to Timothy Owen Connor. Tim would turn out to be the only one of their children to be born in the United States.

After his return from Japan, the Connor family received orders for post-war Germany and then Austria. While not exactly the Sound of Music experience, during that European assignment Betty brought two more Connors into the world—Theresa Kay Connor in Munich and Thomas Michael Connor in Salzburg.

Betty quickly developed European survival skills, balancing a military wife’s duties, parenting three young children and navigating the towns and villages recovering from the war. She even experimented with making the Austrian crepes known as Palatschinken.

Upon returning to the US, Ralph was assigned to domestic postings in Santa Barbara and Fort Huachuca, giving the Connor family consecutive assignments to coastal California and Arizona’s cactus country. Betty preferred the former.

In 1958, as reconstruction was accelerating in Japan, Ralph received orders for Okinawa and this time Betty and their three 8- to 11-year-old children would go with them. After all, the Army could support a family of five. Of course, Okinawa is where they became a family of six, with the arrival of Tina Lou. In Tina’s baby book Betty noted that Tina required a party dress for her first visit to the NCO club before she was even one month old.

Having stationed them in San Francisco, Santa Barbara, Arizona, Germany, Austria and Okinawa, the military decided to give the Connors a rounded military experience and the family’s next assignment was Fort Devens, Massachusetts. Time for the kids to put their shorts in the foot locker and get ready to try their hands tapping maple trees for syrup in a New England winter.

After New England, the Army decided to get one last tour out of the Connors and they received orders for Herzogenaurach, Germany. This gave Betty a chance to visit Christmas markets and hone her Palatschinken skills.

It was then, after 28 years of military service and nearly 20 years of world travel, the Connors decided they were ready for a change. With Ralph being a native Oregonian, they chose Corvallis, the home of Oregon State University, as the place where he could give his children the best opportunity to pursue higher education (all four Connor kids graduated from OSU). So Ralph retired from the Army in 1965 and took a position with the Pacific Northwest Water Lab in Corvallis, Oregon (now a part of the US Environmental Protection Agency).

Ever the adventurer, Betty pulled up stakes in Germany to put down roots in Corvallis. There, she and Ralph, raised the remaining kids (Tim had graduated high school in Europe and enlisted in the Army), cooked Sunday waffles, tended their garden and made a home.

Their family was devastated when in 1970, Ralph was stricken with and eventually passed away from cancer, leaving Betty to raise 10-year-old Tina on her own.

Never one to shrink from a challenge, Betty trained, studied and became a phlebotomist at Good Samaritan Hospital. There she performed what we now call “essential duties” until her retirement.

Betty continued to tend her home and garden in SW Corvallis, spoiling her two rambunctious dachshunds, Otto and Beebin, and ensuring that Tina graduated from both Corvallis High and Oregon State—That is until 1995, when she joined Tina and her husband Jay in Portland to help care for her newest grandson, Connor Ward. For the first five years of his life, Connor enjoyed, tried, tested and loved his “Grammie”, forging a lifelong bond between them.

Betty was now ready to settle into her dream lifestyle—a house on the Oregon coast. Theresa (now Beck) and husband Mike found her a new house in Waldport, where Betty could begin her next chapter, feeding birds and squirrels and creating a coastal garden (and chasing away the hungry, rose-loving deer).

Betty loved living on the coast and relished every minute there—even when the challenges of being on her own became insurmountable. After several medical events,

Betty found it necessary to move to a living situation where she could receive more personalized care. She returned to the Willamette Valley and settled into Brookdale in Albany. Betty lived there, receiving regular visits from her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren until the Corona virus made such visits impossible. After testing positive for COVID in early December, with Tim, Tina and Connor at her side, Betty peacefully passed away on December 28, 2020.

Betty Lou Connor was kind, loving, adventurous and resilient with rarely a cross word to say about anyone. She is, in turn, loved by her brother Jimmy Warner of Omaha, sister Donna Klopping of Mesa, Arizona and her four children and their spouses, Tim Connor (Roxann), Theresa Beck (Michael), Tom Connor and Tina Ward (Jay) as well as Betty's 12 grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren, who miss her every day.

Betty lived by the following adage:

“Whenever you wander, wherever you roam, be happy, healthy and glad to come home.”

In lieu of flowers, a gift to Oregon Humane Society, Corvallis Audubon or the charity of your choice is appreciated.

Events

JAN **Graveside Service** 12:00PM - 01:00PM

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Oak Lawn Memorial Park

2245 SW Whiteside Drive, Corvallis, OR, US, 97333

Comments



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Tina Lou Ward - February 09, 2021 at 03:21 PM