

## Juanita Bell Duke Thompson

A celebration of the life of Juanita Bell Duke Thompson, 84, of Crockett, took place at Central Baptist Church in Crockett, followed by a graveside service at Antioch Cemetery in Lovelady, on Monday, August 13.

Juanita Bell Duke Thompson was born on May 6, 1923 in Port Arthur, Texas. She went home to be with the Lord on August 10, 2007.

Juanita Bell Duke was born to parents who owned the first grocery store in Pear Ridge, Texas, with older twin brothers—ever her protectors and tormentors—Juanita was naturally competitive and a real tomboy. After her father died when she was only three, she was indulged and doted upon by all her relatives, and naturally craved being in the spotlight and performing. Unusually loquacious from the start, Juanita took elocution lessons and gave readings for the Port Arthur Garden Club and on local radio. She took piano lessons as a child and later played a “honky-tonk” piano style for local Baptist churches.

She was proudly claimed by James Robert Thompson, a handsome Aggie, when she was a freshman at Texas Women’s University in Denton. He asked her to wait for him until he finished his degree. As a surprise, he brought her home from their honeymoon to a brand-new, completely furnished house with all of her clothes and personal belongings carefully arranged for her arrival.

In love and happy in their marriage, Bob and Juanita went on to have six children over the next eighteen years: Sharon Anne, Kathryn Jo, Sandra Jeanne, Judith Lynn, Deborah Sue, and (finally!) James Robert Thompson, II. They vacationed every year at Neal’s Vacation Lodges in Concan, Texas and never missed a chance to swim in any available body of water.

Juanita was a charismatic, born leader, who never met a stranger. She was also a rebel at heart, loving to challenge rules. When she was already the mother of four children and the wife of a traveling husband, she taught herself to drive on the freeways of Houston. Juanita loved to speed when she was behind the wheel!

Juanita attended the Baptist church from childhood but accepted Christ as her personal savior years later as an adult. A member of the Central Baptist Church in Crockett, she gave generously of her time, talents, and money. She visited local nursing homes to give comfort. She had a natural affinity for children and youth, and encouraged them to develop their talents and to realize their potential. She took them into her heart and loved them deeply, spending one-on-one time with them and financially supporting their studies. Juanita had many dear friends, especially the members of her Sunday School class. Wherever she went in the community, she cheered and entertained others with her wit and vivacious personality.

Over the last several years, Juanita faced innumerable serious health issues with amazing faith and courage. A widow for almost thirty years, she overcame lung disease, a broken hip, surgeries, and extended hospital stays. All who knew her were blessed and challenged by her love of life and faith in God and His amazing grace.

She was preceded in death by her true love, James Robert Thompson; father, Richard Duke; mother, Maggie Jewel Mount; twin brothers Dick and Joe Duke; sister, Bobbie Landry; brother, Walter Raiford; and son-in-law Hughie Raney.

She is survived by daughters, Sharon Hearne of Wimberley, Kathryn Ferguson of Austin, Sandra Raney of Pearland, Judith Woodson of Zavalla, Deborah Harrelson of Lovelady; only son; James Robert Thompson II, of Marshall; sister, Betty Lawson of Lufkin; grandchildren, Julianne Hearne, Eden Hinshaw, Tara Kirkland, Rustin Raney, Amber Dendy, Brandi Woodson, Christy Jordy, Jeremy and Bryan Harrelson, Katie and Harrison Thompson; sons-in-laws, Wendell Hearne, Allen Woodson, and Carl Dale Harrelson; daughter-in-law Shay Thompson; cousin and lifelong friend, Tem Shaunfield; and many great-grandchildren, nieces, and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made in her memory to Central Baptist Church Youth Programs at 102 N. 7th Street, Crockett Texas 75835.