

Dorothy Mae (Dottie) Warren

Born to Joseph and Anna Pizinger in Great Bend, Kansas, Dottie was the youngest of five children. Within a few years the family moved to Wichita where her father was a musician and band leader, teacher and instrument dealer known throughout the region. He played in the first Wichita Symphony and made sure all of his children learned to play at least one instrument. Dottie learned the violin and the piano but her boundless energy was channeled into lessons at the Edler School of Dance where she excelled in acrobatic dancing. After graduating from East High School she traveled as a singer and dancer in vaudeville.

She later returned to Wichita and, at the end of WWII, she became reacquainted with a North High graduate, dashing returning war veteran, William P. (Bill) Warren, a Bataan Death March Survivor and POW. Both skilled ballroom dancers, their courtship was spent on the dance floor and they were married from 1945 – 1985 when Bill passed away. They came from large families and wanted children of their own, but it took a few years before they were finally blessed with Stephanie and then Michael...although today Stephanie claims that Mike is her older brother! Dottie lived in their home on South Hiram from 1956 until 2011. except for her cat, she lived alone after 1985, until health problems necessitated her move to Villa Maria in Mulvane.

Dottie survived all her older siblings, her three sisters: Lillian Harlan, Alice Sorrells and Grace Smith, and a brother, Arthur Pizinger, who died in his 30s after being paralyzed in a traffic accident. She and her sisters remained very close throughout their lives even though Alice lived in Kansas City and Grace in Houston. When they got together at holidays, all talking at once with the volume escalating, the husbands, kids and cousins usually retreated to another part of the house. It was the perfect excuse to watch football, run an errand or take a nap.

Stephanie remembers one holiday when she took all four sisters to the movie theater to see "That's Entertainment" featuring the best dance numbers from famous old musicals. They were all talking, singing along and dancing in their seats so enthusiastically that she moved to another part of the theater, rather than try to shush them. That was the same year she taught them all line dancing,

with the eldest, Lillian, well into her 80s, kicking and turning with the best of them.

Dottie's family was important to her and she was a stay at home mom until her children were both in school. Wanting to buy a car of her own, in 1964 Dottie began a successful Avon career spanning 47 years. She loved her many loyal customers over the years, sometimes including several generations, especially those with dogs, carrying dog biscuits with her as she delivered their orders. She planned any trips or events around her Avon deliveries and never missed a campaign until one Christmas when she broke her leg in an icy parking lot. She talked Stephanie into staying in Wichita an extra few weeks to make her deliveries and get their next orders...so she didn't actually miss sending in her order on time.

She approached everything with the same dedication and diligence, church and choir attendance and all the kids' sporting events. She was always there and you **never** heard her say "I'm too tired," or "I just don't feel like going." She kept a daily calendar and a record of nearly everything she did from Avon orders to choir selections to the contents of her house.

Her love of music, dance and performance endured throughout her life, encouraging her son Michael in gymnastics and baseball and daughter Stephanie in dance and theater, plus serving as choir director at this very church for more than 30 years. She was a huge sports fan and could never just sit and watch a game, she had to keep score.

Later in life, when she was more comfortable financially, she enjoyed traveling, making trips to California and Colorado to visit her kids and taking three cruises with her daughter. With her church group she was able to visit the Holy Land. In 2007 Stephanie took her to Branson for Mothers Day where they had front row seats at Andy Williams, saw several other shows and then Mike and Cyndi drove up from Little Rock to join them. When Stephanie and Mike and Cyndi came to Wichita to visit her, they always brought the dogs, which Dottie adored and called her "grand-doggies."

It was an adjustment moving into Villa Maria in 2011, but she traded her independence for social activities and outings, regular meals and a much safer environment. In 2012 Stephanie moved back from California to Wichita to help with her transition. Initially Dottie wanted to go home, but Stephanie reminded her how Villa Maria was like a cruise ship. No cleaning, cooking or shopping for groceries, they fix all your meals, have bingo and social activities and you have a hair salon and a chapel on site. She eventually conceded it was a nice place and made the best of it. She had a favorite chair in the lobby where she watched TV and any visitors coming and going and suggested where the other residents should sit. When some of them talked so loudly she couldn't hear the TV, never timid, she would tell them to hush or go in the other room if they wanted to talk, and would sometimes report those who wouldn't comply. She enjoyed classic movies & TV and all music shows, especially Dancing With the Stars. There were some advantages to losing one's memory; every Bonanza episode was a new one.

One of the things she missed most about having her own house was having a pet so her daughter arranged for them to sit in the lobby of the Mulvane Animal Clinic once a week for two years so she could pet and calm all the incoming patients. She didn't care if they were clean, shedding or slobbering, she loved them all from Chihuahuas to Bulldogs to Great Danes, cats to a baby goat, plus the Vets' own pets and some of their boarders. This became her favorite weekly outing, even choosing to spend her birthday in the lobby in 2013. They always made her feel welcome and this formerly busy lady again had some purpose in her life. When weather or health issues kept her at Villa Maria, she enjoyed looking at her photo books of all her new animal friends and their owners.

In addition to trips to the vet and PetCo, Stephanie was determined to make Dottie's life as interesting as possible and took her to Lawrence Stadium for Wingnuts games, to Tanganyika Wildlife Park, Century II for "42nd Street", Hartman Arena for the "So You Think You Can Dance – Road Show" and the Cotillion Ballroom for the Cat Fancy Show this past January.

When Dottie moved to Mulvane, she transferred her church membership to the Mulvane United Methodist Church. Although she left behind many lifelong

friends, she made lots of new friends there. Weather permitting, Stephanie would wheel her across the street for the contemporary service so she could enjoy the cute children and hear the music. She was also partial to the morning snacks, especially to the homemade caramel corn puffs.

Throughout her life she was a woman of strong character and definite opinions who had no trouble sharing them. She fiercely loved her family and her animals. She took pride in her appearance, and was quick to offer help and unsolicited advice, but also financial support when it was needed. For those of us at the receiving end of her “helpful suggestions” or “constructive criticism,” her good heart and generous spirit brought balance. She was a memorable woman with great energy, spunk and a sense of humor and she noticed handsome men until the day she died.

If wealth is measured not by dollars but by the people you touch and impact in your lifetime, Dottie Warren was a very rich woman indeed and we are all richer having known her. She loved life, loved her family and loved God. We know she and her sisters are up there making much sweeter music. And Stephanie suggests her father is no longer “resting in peace.”

With love,

Stephanie