

BOOTSIE KEENER

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CELEBRATION OF LIFE

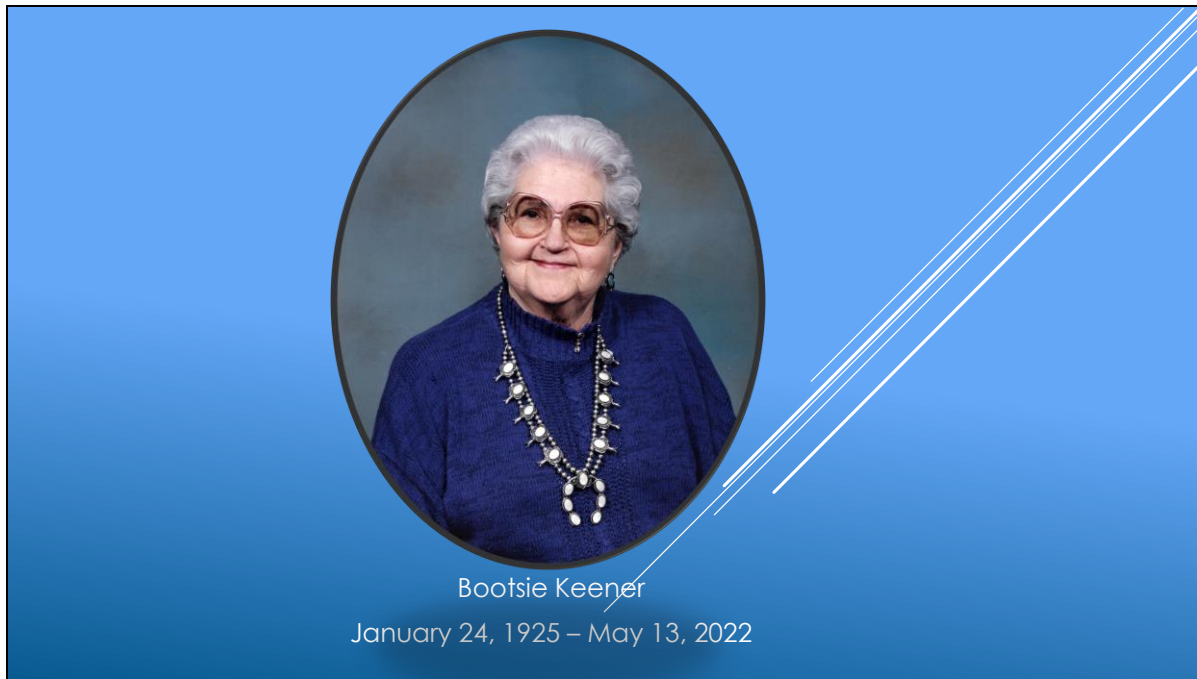


EULOGY

BY

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CITY PARK CHURCH
FORT COLLINS, COLORADO
JUNE 4, 2022



I would like to welcome everyone and thank you for attending this celebration of our mother's life.

I wanted to start at the end because I want to get the emotional part out of the way and focus on celebrating a life well lived. For a year or more mom would often mention that she couldn't understand why God was keeping her here. She wasn't really complaining but just expressing that she was tired. Her eyesight and hearing were failing, she had trouble eating, and everything was getting more and more difficult. The trips to the hospital in an ambulance were becoming more frequent. She hated being in the hospital and hated rehab even more. After discussing things with her, she was very pleased with the idea of never having to go back to the hospital and was comfortable with entering hospice care on April 5th. We received a great deal of comfort when she said that everything explained to her by us and the hospice nurse was what she wanted.

She had a really good month with lots of visitors allowing her to say good-byes. It was clear to all that she was at peace and anticipating her journey.



God certainly had his hand in the next sequence of events. On Sunday, May 8, my daughter, Carri and son-in-law, Bill flew from Arkansas for a visit. Both are RN's and have experience in hospice. Mom was doing really well the first couple of days of their visit, then on Tuesday evening, things began to decline and by Friday night she was at peace. Their presence with our mom was a blessing.



They read the Bible to her, played hymns, and prayed with her, providing a peaceful transition. Carri was able to spend the last couple of nights in her room providing her a great deal of comfort.



Veva and Oscar Russell

Beulah Marie Keener was born on January 24, 1925, in Watrous, New Mexico, to Oscar and Veva Russell. By the way, this is the only time I will use her formal name as she never seemed to warm up to it.



Like many raised during that period, life wasn't easy. Stories of our mom's early life could fill pages, but one story she told is worth repeating. Mom said, "One of my earliest memories is living in a little one room stone house with no plumbing, water or electricity. We hauled water from town, had kerosene lanterns for lighting, a wood stove for heat and cooking and used an outhouse. Every Saturday, Daddy would heat water on the wood stove and the four of us kids would take our baths, one right after the other (using the same water). When it was bedtime, Mother and Daddy would pull a mattress out from under the bed, and we four kids would all sleep crosswise on it."



She met the love of her life, Logan Keener, when his family bought a neighboring ranch outside of Clayton, New Mexico. She was in the 3rd grade, and he was in the 6th grade.



She and Logan married in South Mills, North Carolina, on December 12, 1942, and settled in Norfolk, Virginia, where he was stationed in the Navy during WWII.

Our mom and dad's 49 years together provided a great model for us to follow.



Deniece explained it very well when she said they were playful and had fun together. They never walked past each other without reaching out and simply touching.



Our mom had a beauty of character that endeared her to all that crossed her path. Our home was always open to visitors, and no one needed to phone ahead. Memories abound of friends and relatives dropping in or stopping by for a visit, and they were always welcomed with open arms and good meals.

The one thing that defined our mom was her love of God and her dedication to serving. In Rawlins the preacher and his wife had a standing invitation for lunch at our home on Sundays if no else invited them. Among other duties, she typed and printed the church bulletin on mimeograph machine, a difficult and messy process. After printing we would often help fold them.

Our mother was a member of this very church for 40 years. I'm sure we have no idea of all of the things she did. When I called Valerie (the church secretary) I asked if she knew the date our mom joined the church. She said they had a book that membership was recorded in and many of the entries were in Bootsie's handwriting.

A most interesting story is of her and a couple of the other ladies counting the church offering (well into their 80s). They would go in on Monday and enter the amounts on a spreadsheet by hand and then total them. They would then spend time trying to figure out why the totals did not agree. We often wondered if the church was trying to figure out a way to get them to discontinue this service and simply didn't want to hurt their feelings. Valerie said it didn't really ever come to that, but she did admit that she sometimes had to help them balance the totals or perhaps even recount.



When the work was finished, they would always go to Taco Bell and enjoy lunch. Here is a photo of the manager with whom they became quite good friends.

Our mom also had her very own seat at the back of the church. One Sunday when Miriam and I went with her, someone was in her seat and one of the ushers politely asked them to move explaining "that is Bootsie's seat."



Mom and some of the other ladies were instrumental in starting a church service at New Mercer where she eventually became a resident. After moving there, she had a special seat at a table and was keeper of the song books which she would help hand out. Miriam and I were fortunate to be there when they honored her and her close friend Electa who was also a resident.

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One of the employees from New Mercer came to visit her when we moved her to the Nursing facility and said she had known her for 15 years and remembers her from those church services.



Our poor mother led a tortured life. Our dad started it all and the rest of us followed his lead. He found all kinds of ways to scare our mom. One of the most frequent was throwing something at the newspaper causing her to scatter the pages into the air. I can picture her in heaven reading and our dad picking up a coaster and flinging it at the paper.

When our dad's health was fading and he was on oxygen full time, he took a bath one evening and washed his hair. He decided to fluff up the hair on his head and crawl all the way down the hall, sneaking up bedside mom's chair and saying "BOO!" Of course, she practically jumped out of her chair and he enjoyed a nice laugh.

When I was living at home, I had a rubber tarantula that I hid everyplace imaginable; the sugar and flour containers, the coffee can, drawers, and numerous other places. What I could never understand is that she always returned it to me.



Russ and I found a rattlesnake while hunting and brought it home in our lunchbox. We sat it on the kitchen counter and then anxiously waited for our mother to go near it, causing it to rattle. We were careful (I think) to make sure she didn't actually open the lunchbox.

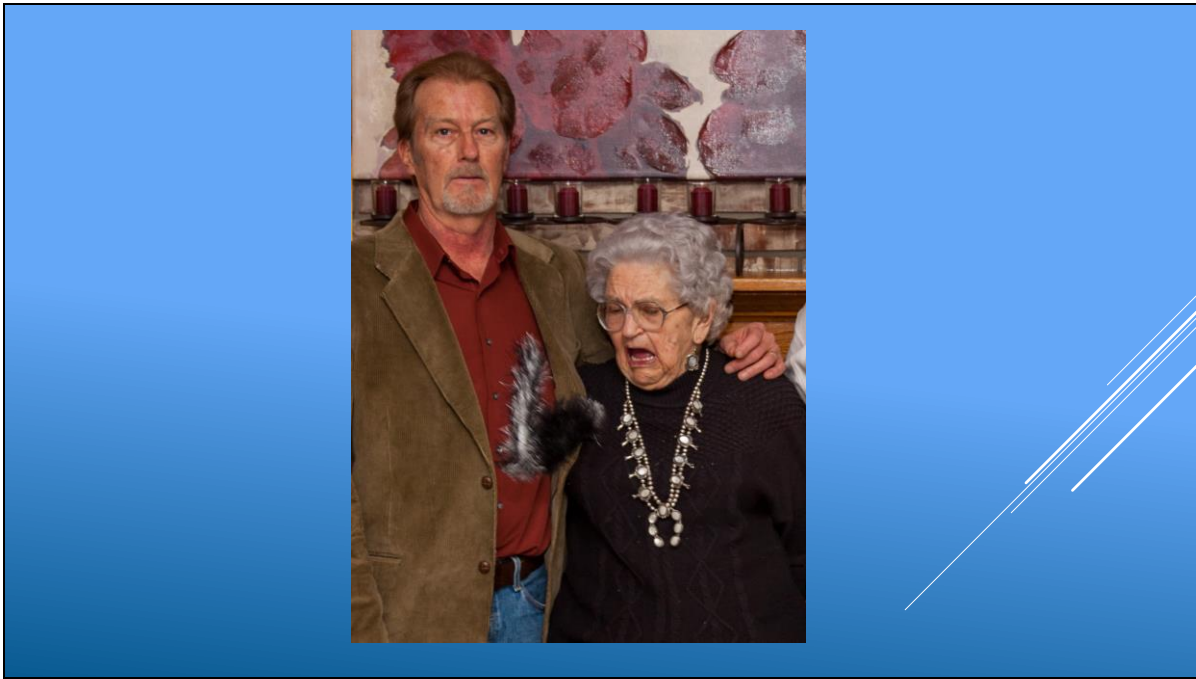
Grandkids also got great joy in scaring her. She was always afraid of spiders and snakes and they learned they could get her to jump by simply saying the word "snake". After a great deal of coaxing, I once got her to hold two rattlesnakes we had just killed.



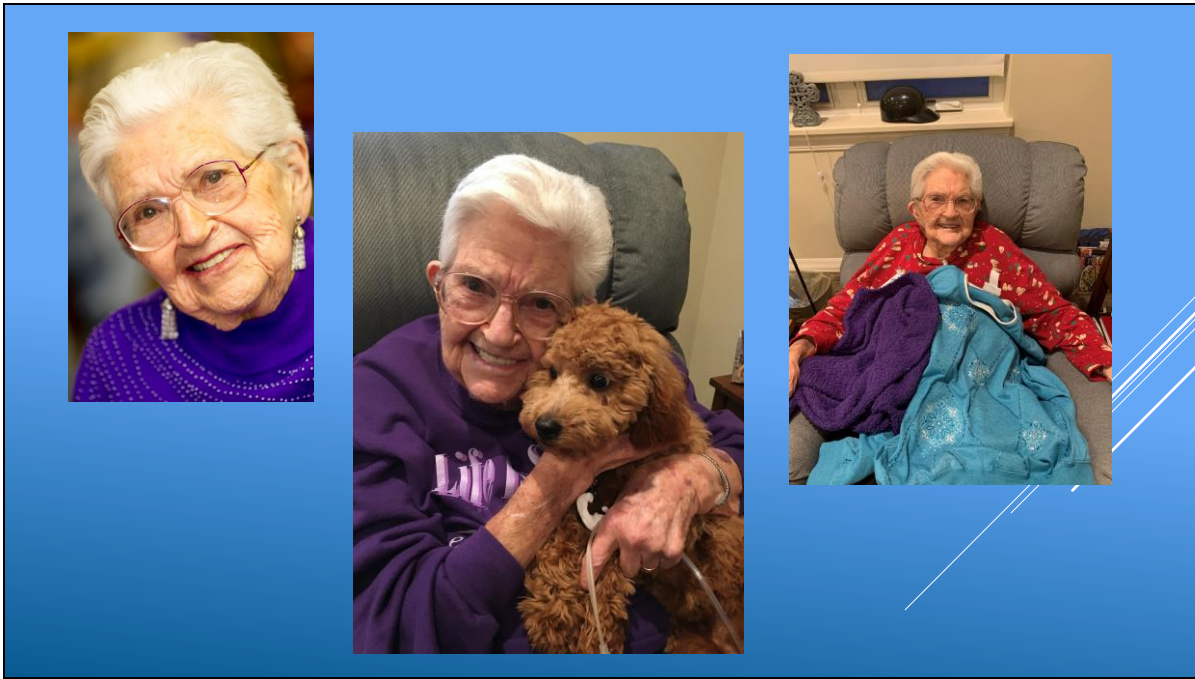
The following photos are a perfect example of her torture. Deniece's husband Kevin was taking a photo of our mom and the four of us. Kevin was often the photographer at family events. He was always there when we needed help with anything regarding our mother. The first photo shows the happy group.



Just as Kevin snapped the next photo, Deniece's son David tossed a stuffed skunk towards our mom. The results are obvious.



A closeup shows how the skunk was in perfect flight, its tail up in the air. You could try a thousand times and never again get this shot.



Our mom became a master of logistics when Logan's job required frequent household moves. They moved from Clayton, NM, to Dalhart, Texas, to Laramie, Wyoming, to Beaver, Oklahoma, back to Laramie, to Rawlins, to Boise City, Oklahoma, then Colorado Springs, next to Fritch, Texas—eventually retiring in LaPorte, Colorado. As Deniece recollected, she would get everyone packed up, moved out, settled in, and sitting down in the new school desk and church pew, with military precision.

She loved listen to or read books by Billy Graham, Charles Stanley and other prominent ministers. In spite of her failing sight, she would read the Bible on her iPad daily, and in her last years she wouldn't miss David Jeremiah on TV. She also enjoyed weekly visits from her good friend Chet as he would read the Bible to her.

Our mom loved to go to garage sales! She would go all day long if someone would accompany her. One of the results of these outings was a large collection of Bibles and Baptist hymnals—she would not pass one up. I often told her after she was gone, I was going to go to garage sales and spread a little bit of her ashes on each driveway.

Mom loved playing cards, especially progressive rummy—even when she had trouble handling the cards and her eyesight was failing. You would think she didn't really know what she had and then she would start placing a run down and suddenly say, "I played them all." Tina and Robert would come visit her almost every year and I think she made them play cards for 12 hours a day.



A little-known fact, but an important one, is that in her 30s she could stand on one foot and put the other foot behind her head. Do you think any of her granddaughters can do that?

Mom hated to wear coats. There are many stories of people coming up to her and asking if they could get her a coat. I think some thought she was homeless.



She got a great deal of joy cooking. When a visitor showed up, they would always be greeted with some good aromas. Some of the most famous were her biscuits and gravy, her stacked enchiladas or the Spanish coffee cake. Her Christmas candy was also famous. She would make a dozen different kinds of candy, but her divinity was probably the most in demand. Russ reminded me of the number of tins she would fill each year and give out to friends and relatives.



A really special event in her life was the birth of Josh's son. Our mom dearly loved all of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, but amazingly, this was the only male descendent to carry on the Keener name. And to make it even more precious to her they named him Logan.

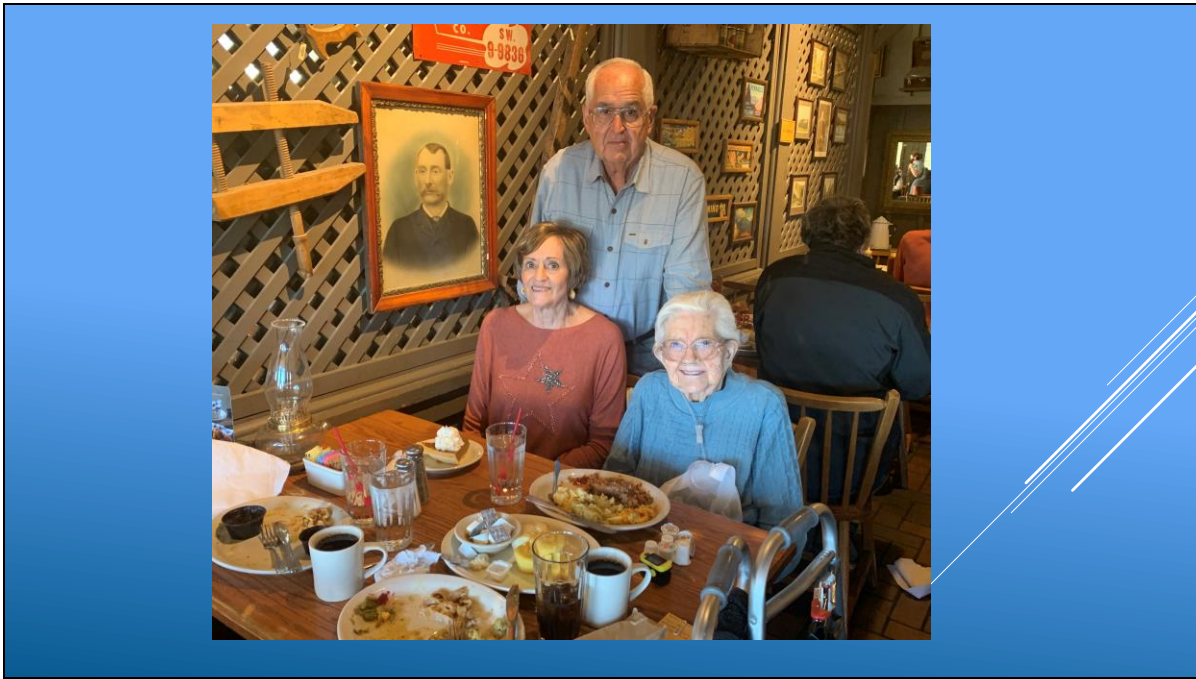
She was a great fan the Nuggets and Rockies. In the final years, watching them was one of the few joys she had. She would often turn down her baths and meals if a game was on.



It took a special event like a birthday party to pull her away, and even then, it wasn't easy. She really couldn't hear much and eyesight got so bad she would watch with binoculars. Even then, she couldn't really tell who was performing or what the score was.

Along with her failing hearing and eyesight, mom really didn't enjoy eating much. One of her favorite things was Noosa yogurt which Traci kindly helped keep in good supply. She also like home-canned peaches and hoarded them, only sharing them with Traci when she visited. Traci, our mother loved you dearly and cherished her time with you. Our family appreciates all you did for her.

Before being in jail during COVID (as our mom described it), she enjoyed her outings with Deniece to the doctors or other places as they typically went to Hunan, one of her favorite spots where she would always order hot and sour soup and an eggroll. When she could no longer go out, Deniece often brought her smoothies and other goodies.



After COVID, we were fortunate to be able to take her out to her favorite breakfast spot, The Breakfast Club, and the next day to Cracker Barrel for Thanksgiving dinner. I believe this was the last time she was able to go out and eat as it was very tiring for her, and as you can see by her plate, she had difficulty eating most foods.



When I started to write this, I was thinking I needed to come up with lists of extraordinary accomplishments. The more I thought about it, the more I realized it wasn't accomplishments that mattered. It's the little things she did for each of us throughout the years. It's the love and support she showed for her extended family, friends and fellow church members throughout her life.

It's things like Randy's memory of when he first started dating Glorianna. On her birthday our mom fixed a really nice fondue dinner for her. Randy said that always meant so much to him. Of course, Randy has always wondered if our mom just really liked Gloriana and couldn't figure out how the cutest girl in Fritch, Texas would go out with him. So, she was doing what she could to keep her. It's fortunate that she did because Glorianna always treated her special and supplied her with homemade relish, homemade soups and other numerous other things.

Russ talked about how much she enjoyed just spending time with the family. Lots of times on a Saturday or after church on Sunday, she fixed lunches and we went arrowhead hunting or on picnics in the mountains.

It's memories of getting up at 4:00 AM to go hunting or fishing and always having a good breakfast that mom had prepared for us.

What really mattered was she was always *just there*! When we needed comforting, she was always there. When we needed advice, she was always there.

When Russ spent months recovering from kidney disease she was there.

When I fell out of the car and spent 6 weeks flat on my back, she was there.

Then one day you wake up and she's not there. And there is a hole in your heart that can never be filled, because only a mother's love can fill it.



But our mother lived a full life; and it was clear to everyone around her that she was ready to go home and be with her Savior.

She was ready to be with her mother and dad. And with her siblings, Donnie, who died in infancy, her sister Vi, and her brothers Tom, Larry and Oscar. She has one brother, Ted, that is still with us.



And most importantly she is with her beloved husband Logan whom she has missed for 31 long years.

We love you mom and will miss you dearly but we are so happy you are finally home.