



Thelma Livesay Gingerich

September 22, 1921 – October 11, 2011

(From Legacy.com)

GINGERICH, THELMA K. Sept. 22, 1921 to Oct. 11, 2011

Thelma was born to John W. and Rose Cummins Livesay in the small railroad town of Hinton, WV, as a happy little girl who enjoyed nothing more than skipping around town and singing songs for anyone who would listen. Her life was full of family, love and joy. She worked at a very early age before and after school to help her family after her father's untimely death. She was loved by one and all in her town. As a member of the Greatest Generation, in her young life Thelma was serving her country in any way she could to contribute to the WWII effort. She, her mother and sister would go in the middle of the night down the hill to the railroad station with coffee, hot chocolate and homemade goodies for our servicemen when they were passing through.

After Thelma graduated from Hinton High School, she took a clerical job at a company in Richmond, VA. She often took the train between Richmond and Lexington, VA, where she had family, and also to Hinton. It was on a train that she met the love of her life, Clayton P. Gingerich. She was looking for a seat on this train, and the only one available was next to a handsome young sailor. (Clay always swore that Thelma picked him up!) After writing back and forth for a few months, and seeing each other, they married on August 23, 1942. It was wartime, and Clay was called upon to serve his country away from home for many long periods of time. Oftentimes, Thelma would move on short notice to be where she

could be close to her husband. Clay received orders to report for duty in the Mediterranean Sea. Thelma went with him, with her children in tow, and they settled in France. They lived there for several years, amongst other navy families, but also made many new French friends. A lot of our American traditions are not observed in France, so Thelma made sure that all the American kids had their Halloween by organizing Trick or Treat activities. She felt very strongly about upholding traditions and nothing was more important to her than her faith, her children, her family and her friends. After returning from Europe in 1954, Thelma and Clay moved their family into their home in Chula Vista, where they resided for the next 56 years. Thelma was involved in many venues of service to her community and church. She was a room mother at her children's schools and served in many capacities within the PTA organization at Mueller Elementary School in Chula Vista. She received "Volunteer of the Year" award in 1979 while she and Clay lived in Novato, CA for a few years. She also was an active member of the First United Methodist Church, and served in many officer positions in the Women's Society and the Red Bird Circle there. In her later years, in addition to continuing with her church activities, she joined the Senior Writers Group at the Norman Center in Chula Vista and led that group for over 15 years.

Upon retirement, Thelma traveled with Clay extensively across America and Canada, making friends everywhere they went. One of their best trips ever was when they went to Australia and New Zealand. In 2010, even though it was hard to leave her friends and church in Chula Vista, Thelma decided to sell her house and make her home in Oceanside, closer to her daughter. Every week, she enjoyed sharing breakfast at McDonald's or Chick Filet with her friends from her new church. Family and friends helped Mom celebrate her 90th birthday on September 25, 2011, with a huge bash attended by over 100 people.

Thelma went to heaven on Tuesday evening, October 11, 2011, with family by her side. We all feel blessed to have had her for our mother, grandmother, great grandmother and aunt and will miss her terribly.

Thelma was predeceased by her loving husband Clay, her parents, her siblings, and stepgrandson.

She is survived by daughters Carol Hammerbach and Ellen Palmer and husband Arthur Palmer, her sons Ross and wife Beverly, and Allan and wife Kathi, along with many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held to celebrate Thelma's life on Monday, October 17, 2011 at 1:00 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church at 1200 East H Street in Chula Vista. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that those who would like, to please bring a new, unwrapped teddy bear to the service. Mom loved children more than anything and these teddy bears will be donated to Childrens' Hospital after the service.

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