



Bernice Irene Fillinger

September 9, 1919 - August 14, 2009

Bernice Irene Etter Fillinger was born September 9, 1919 in LaCoste, Texas to Mattie and Charles Etter. She grew up a country girl in Medina County and spoke often of her adventures with her three sisters and four brothers. She remembered following "Papa" through the field in a furrow plowed by his plow horse. She often pointed out the rock corral near Hwy 90 and Bippert Lane where she remembers walking atop as a child. She let you know that she didn't need a gun to kill a rabbit; she did it with a rock. Bernice was a true Tomboy and lived her entire life with a strong, I can do it myself attitude.

Bernice completed high school in San Antonio while living with her sister, Vera, and began her adult life. She first worked at Summers Drug. In 1937 she met a young man from D'Hanis that she first thought of as a smart aleck and on October 21st, 1939 that young man, Jim Fillinger became her husband. For the next thirty six years Bernice and Jim lived the adventure and had four children.

Their life together began in San Antonio. The San Antonio stay was interrupted by WWII and Bernice and Jim, with Pat and Buster in tow, moved to Pueblo Colorado, then to Grand Island, Nebraska while Jim served in the military. After the war they returned to San Antonio, Charles and Gary came along.

Bernice had a full time job raising her family. She volunteered her time to her children's school and worked bingos, was active in the PTA and served as President of the PTA. Bernice and Jim lived in San Antonio until Hwy 90 was expanded and then moved west of San Antonio to a country home on Grosenbacher Road.

Bernice dealt with a lot of change in her life and knew to expect the unexpected. It was not unusual for her husband to leave for work in one car and come home in another. Jim did a lot of wheeling and dealing. Bernice particularly enjoyed Medina Lake. She enjoyed the numerous locations they had at the lake including Tshicharts. Forrie's, and the houses near Seekatz in Cedar Hills. Bernice was the fisherman and proved it on a regular basis. She wore the paint off of many silver Bomber top water lures, which was her favorite bait. She had caught anything catchable on a Zebco 33 in Medina Lake from a 5 lb black bass to a moccasin. She was fishing once with Jim and he was catching crappie one after the other and she couldn't get a bite. Then a fish hit her rod and broke her line. She put on a new hook and dropped it back down in the same place only to have the fish bite and break the line again. Jim gave her his rod and reel that had heavier line and she dropped it back in again. This time the fish bit again and she landed a 5 ½ lb. black bass that had her other two hooks still in its mouth.

A little known fact is that Bernice was the original designated driver. This was initiated by the D'Hanis church festival and something to do with beer tickets.

Shortly before Jim retired, another move was in store and life in Castroville began. After retirement, they relocated to the country on Potranco road where they lived until Jim passed away. Bernice then relocated to Leon Valley and lived there for the next thirty one years.

The typical week from Leon Valley included four or five lake day trips. These

may or may not involve grandkids, most of the time it did. Going to Grandma's was the highlight for all the grandkids. The lake was one adventure of many. From Chucky Cheese to Sea World it was always Grandma making the grandchildren happy. Not only were her family's kids involved she was an extended Grandma to her neighborhood. Bernice interrupted her lake trips for extended bus trips throughout the United States. As the grandchildren became older, Las Vegas appeared on her radar screen. It began with road trips and in 1989 her air travel began. She would be home today but gone tomorrow. We don't know for sure but we think she made as many as thirteen trips to Vegas in one year.

Luck seemed to stay on her side. Vegas was enjoyed but the Texas Lottery did not make money on her. Pick three and Lotto Texas paid her more than she invested. Her lake trips continued and her adventures at the lake expanded. She built an addition to her lake house at 70 years of age and was upset when the contractor was going to install gutters before he painted the fascia board on the eaves of the house. She didn't ask for help, she went up on a two story tin roof by herself and painted the fascia board while hanging over the edge of the roof. After successfully painting the fascia boards she headed back to the ladder to get down and kicked the ladder, knocking it to the ground. Now she was at the lake, by herself on a hot tin roof. Things got better. She was trying to figure out how to get down off the roof without a ladder and knocked the paint can over. She couldn't get paint on her new tin roof so she took off her pants and wiped off the roof. Got the picture? Finally, she decides to attempt to drop off the roof onto an 8 inch wide cinder block wall 6 feet below the edge of the roof. She does it without incident at seventy years young.

Then, her most famous feat. In August of 2003 Bernice locked herself out of her house. Rather than call for help or talk to her neighbors, she decides to

get another ladder and climb into the small window in her master bath that was 6 feet off the ground and 12 inches wide. She puts one leg through the window leaned in and then fell into the bathroom. She did not reach the floor as her pants leg hooked on the window frame. This was in the afternoon in August in 100 degree weather, hanging upside down in a closed bathroom without A/C. She hung there for about five hours until a neighbor's barking dog brought the neighbor to help. She was taken to the hospital but had only bumps and bruises. All of her ladders disappeared after this episode.

The spirit and energy Bernice possessed and shared motivated and guided her family. Modesty is an understatement when you try to describe her life. There was never an agenda with Bernice, what you saw was what you got. And you needed to be ready because you got it whether you wanted it or not.

The family thanks all that were her friends and that touched her life. She has now embarked on her final adventure with the Lord.

Tribute Wall

CM

“ *I moved away from Texas several years ago but just saw this recently. My condolences to the family.*

My family lived next door to Bernice in Leon Valley so she knew me from the time I was born to when I went off to college. I remember her being very fu

Charles Macias - June 25, 2015 at 12:00 AM

LR

“ *I'm sorry that I'm just now finding out about Bernice. She was a wonderful woman and always made me feel welcome. My sorrow that she is no longer here with y'all is great. She is greatly missed. My love to you all!!*

Lisa Sprague Rockwell - April 06, 2011 at 12:00 AM

PS

“ *To Gary--Brenda and Family*

Our thoughts and prayers are with you on the loss of your mother. I know we spoke of your mom's condition many times and how much you and your family loved her.

I just read her obituary and more fully know why she was s

Paul and Marie Sabol - August 18, 2009 at 12:00 AM

LF

“ Bernice was a very special lady who through the years provided wonderful memories that today I still treasure. Smiles always cross my face when I remember her teaching the boys to ride the red wagon down the lake hill and all of them crashing at the botto

Linda Fillinger - August 17, 2009 at 12:00 AM

RT

“ Thank you so much for allowing me to be part of this tribute and memborial to your mother. After hearing all those stories and reading her eulogy, she sounds like an amazing woman. Hold on to those great memories and she will live on in your hearts fore

Rev. Edward A. Tello - August 17, 2009 at 12:00 AM

LI

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with all of you at this time. Aunt Bernice was such a loving and giving person. Love to each of you.

Leonard and Gerri Ittis - August 17, 2009 at 12:00 AM

DF

“ You are in our thoughts, Pat. Our sympathy to you and all your family.
From the Fraser family.

Don and Theresa Fraser - August 17, 2009 at 12:00 AM

LD

“ Our deepest sympathy to the family. I'll always remember Aunt Bernice as a very strong woman and will miss her dearly. I learned a lot about my mom's early years from her, so I will always cherish the times we talked. Love, Linda and Claude

Linda Santee Davis - August 16, 2009 at 12:00 AM

RR

“ *A wonderful Texas Lady with a heart as big as the beloved Hill Country and the Medina Valley.
Thanks for the memories and that delicious fried chicken.
God Bless your loving soul Mom.*

Ronald & Patricia Rose - August 16, 2009 at 12:00 AM

DC

“ *Our thoughts and prayers are with you all. Though she is gone, her life will always be celebrated by those close to her and her spirit,her dreams and her hopes will live on in each of you.*

Don and Clara Carsten - August 16, 2009 at 12:00 AM

MN

“ *Extending our heartfelt condolences on the loss of your loved one.
Directors & Staff at Mission Park Funeral Chapels North*

Mission Park Funeral Chapels North - August 15, 2009 at 12:00 AM