



Bonnah B. Brockman

September 28, 1918 - August 21, 2010

BONNAH B. BROCKMAN, R.N.,
1918-2010

Honored R.N. from BAMC Overcame Many Obstacles to Serve Vets and Others

Bonnah Belle Hypes Brockman was born in Buffalo, West Virginia on September 28, 1918 to George and Laura Hypes. Bonnah was the 9th of 12 siblings raised by a coal miner and his devoted wife who reared their family on Smith Creek Holler. Bonnah was born with a physical disability, a bone cyst in her left lower leg, and the family declined medical intervention. Her physical challenges may have held her down, but never held her back. She insisted on running with the boys, climbing trees and turning cartwheels with the best of them, and insisted against her father's wishes to attend school at the age of 8. She had studied with her siblings and rapidly caught up with her age-appropriate class.

At the age of sixteen Bonnah left home. She spent 2 years in a children's hospital to obtain the surgical intervention needed to correct her physical disability. Her rehabilitation was facilitated by a Public Health Nurse with the kind and generous support of friends and educators who had taken an interest in this aspiring young girl. She returned to high school and completed the final two years. She lived with local families to provide child care and housekeeping services in exchange for room and board and \$2.00 per week.

She was active in many clubs in high school including Glee Club, Orchestra, and was the Editor-in-Chief of the 1938 Washington District High School Yearbook.

After high school, she continued to do "live-in" maid and child care work until she saved enough money from her meager wages to attend Charleston General Hospital & School of Nursing. Initially she was denied admission due to being a "cripple." After many appeals and rejections, she was admitted.

She graduated in 1942 at the top of her class; in fact, upon graduation, she achieved the second highest score on the West Virginia State Board of Nursing Exam. This was a fact that she frequently recited over the years as she took great pride in her academic accomplishments, given her drive to overcome the disability and disadvantages of her birth and childhood.

Bonah lived and worked for several years in New York as a single lady and later shared many stories of the 40's in the NY of that day. She also recalled being in the operating room at Staten Island General Hospital the day Pearl Harbor was bombed in WWII. In the early 1950's she applied to be stationed at Gorgas Hospital in Panama Canal Zone as a civil service nurse during the Korean Conflict. It was there that she met the love of her life, Don Martin Brockman from Quemado, Texas, who was stationed there with the army. He preached at her church one Sunday morning and she invited him for a home-made lunch. They were inseparable from that day forward and were married after a courtship of six weeks, on September 26, 1952. Their love flourished and sustained them both through the many ups and downs of life. Bonah worked as a nurse in several Texas communities over the years: Bryan Air Base Hospital near Bryan/College Station, Madison County Hospital in Madisonville, El Paso County Hospital in El Paso, Val Verde County Hospital in Del Rio, Collin Memorial Hospital in McKinney, VA Hospital in Marlin and her final 10 years in the profession at Brook Army Medical Center's Beach Pavilion Ward 43C at Fort Sam Houston. There she was known as "Mom" by many Vietnam Vets and others who returned there for care. Her co-workers remember her as a true leader and motivator who lifted the morale of both

patients and staff by her positive outlook and enthusiastic approach to providing care for soldiers who had lost limbs while serving their country. Bonnah's husband Don shared how once in the 1970's U.S. Representative Henry B. Gonzales was touring the ward for morale building and he noted to "Mom" how the wards were so hot and uncomfortable. Bonnah responded that there were many good men returning from war who had to suffer the terrible heat in San Antonio due to no air conditioning in the building. She told suggested that "Henry B." ought to do something about that for the soldiers. Soon after, air conditioning was added to the wards. In spring of 1980 Bonnah received an honorable citation from BAMC upon her retirement. A poignant day was her final day of life, when the Hospice nurse on duty noted to the family that he had been one of those patients at BAMC many years ago. After retiring from BAMC, Bonnah assisted her husband with his company, Brockman Pest Control for several years before they both retired. During the 1980's Bonnah met yet another challenge when she contracted breast cancer. After several years' battle, she was designated "cancer free" and went on to work as a volunteer speaker for breast cancer awareness and encouraging others with this disease in the San Antonio region. Once again Bonnah overcame a potential hurdle that she refused to allow to hold her back. Bonnah was an alumna initiate of Alpha Phi Fraternity, initiated in the 1990's at the Omega Chapter at the University of Texas in Austin. She and Don were members of the MacArthur Park Church of Christ until Alzheimer's disease required she step back from active involvement. The many dear friends, brothers and sisters at "Mac" have been instrumental in caring for Bonnah over the years and keeping Don busy and loved after Bonnah became less available.

Bonnah's life was filled with joy, service and love of the Lord Jesus who she trusted in all of her trials and who brought her through this life as a victor. She may have been slowed down a time or two, but she was never held back. We praise God that she is with him now in peace and comfort.

Bonnah is survived by her husband of 58 years, Don Martin Brockman, Sr., children: Emily Beth Moreno and her husband Mario of Von Ormy, Laura Sue Murray and her husband Dean of San Antonio, Don Martin Brockman, Jr. of Houston, grandchildren: Diane Ventresca and husband Zach of Austin, Stephanie Smith and husband Tim of Flagstaff, AZ, Rebecca Beall of Kyle and David Beall of Columbus, OH; great grandchildren: Alyssa and Mariah Caribardi of Austin; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Those wishing to make a memorial donation are encouraged to donate to the Medina Children's Home or the American Cancer Society.

Memorial services will include public visitation on Friday, August 27th at Mission Parks North from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. and a Celebration of Bonnah's life on Saturday, August 28th at 2:00 p.m. at the MacArthur Park Church of Christ. There will be a private burial at Ft. Sam National Cemetery.

Tribute Wall

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“ *Aunt Bonnah was an extraordinary faithful and loving human being. She is now home where she belongs. She will be greatly missed until we all reunite one day.*

SHANE QUINN - August 26, 2010 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 26, 2010 at 12:00 AM