



Mary Louise Adkisson

October 5, 1924 - February 20, 2021

Louise Mary Gaenslen Adkisson was born on October 5, 1924, in San Antonio, Texas, and passed away on February 20, 2021, at the age of 96.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Hershel, her parents, George Ralph and Luisa Maria Stille Gaenslen, brother George R. Gaenslen II, and sister Elizabeth Cornelia Gaenslen Trainor. She is survived by children Charles Adkisson, Tommy Adkisson (Karen Barbee), Carol Ann Adkisson Spurgin (Bill), Barbara Adkisson (Victor Garcia), and grandchildren Brian Krzywonski (Nicole), Julie Choffel (Jason Chang), Suzanna Choffel (Paul Oveisi), and Lizzie Choffel Cantu (Ken) and great-grandchildren, Campbell and Cassidy Krzywonski, Cora, Omi, and Leo Chang, and Luisa and Isabel Oveisi.

Louise attended St. Gerard's Elementary and High Schools. She was born into a family with deep roots in that parish, her uncle Fred Gaenslen having been the architect of the church and school. Her childhood was shaped by the noted families of her mother, Luisa Stille, and her father, George Gaenslen, both of whom contributed to their family legacies by their marriage late in life (commended no less, by the pastor at St. Gerard's) and by the propagation of their rich and storied cross-cultural heritage lived in unassuming surroundings that belied their circumstance. Their home housed artifacts that revealed the tenor of not-so-ordinary early lives: musical instruments, classic books, formal portraits of ancestors, and velvet-covered family albums full of carefully

preserved pictures snapped during the 19th century. She had private piano lessons given by a maiden aunt with a certificate from an elite conservatory who lived across the street on Dumoulin Avenue. The original street name, Bowen, was replaced at the behest of her grandmother, Mary Elizabeth Bowen, who supported the Catholic Archdiocese's establishment of the Home for the Colored Poor by Father John A. Dumoulin, which became the nucleus of Holy Redeemer Parish, associated with St. Peter Claver Parish.

Her family history was large, with expressions of it still visible here and there in San Antonio: a historical marker on the River Walk commemorating Bowen's Island, her father, George Ralph Gaenslen's birthplace; architectural plaques on a number of Catholic churches and schools, including St. Gerard's, which her uncle, Fred Gaenslen, designed; familial street names in and around the S. New Braunfels area where the family settled; and stained glass windows with family names in St. Gerard's Catholic Church. Two grandfathers, both surgeons, served during the Civil War. Dr. John Jacob Gaenslen, himself descended from an American Revolutionary War surgeon, served in the Confederate Army and later married Louise's staunchly pro-Union grandmother, Mary Elizabeth Bowen. Louise's maternal grandfather, Dr. Henry Stille, descendent of Alfred Stille, an early president of the American Medical Association, served in the Union Army. Others were early San Antonio residents who took an active leadership role in the establishment of local government such as the city council, county commissioner's office, and postmaster, and who served alongside the likes of Sam Maverick, signer of the Texas Declaration of Independence.

Louise loved to share these memories of her ancestors, passing down the oral stories behind the portraits, Civil War artifacts, letters from the 1800s written in beautiful, scrolling script, and so many verses. She enchanted at least two generations with these stories. It was our great pleasure to meet our Mexican cousins and Gaenslen relatives at family reunions in later years, making all of

these stories come alive.

Her mother's family was from Laredo, living bi-culturally at a time when the border between Texas and Mexico was porous, but the impact of that connection was at the heart of Louise's upbringing, and bore a red, white, and green imprint on her character. Family visits there played a large role especially during her childhood, returning home having gained affection for la madre patria, lifelong friendships with familia, and a fluency in Spanish. She liked to tell about playing outdoors at El Morrillo, a ranch near Monclova, Mexico, with her friends and cousins, barefoot and long curls tangled, a striking contrast to the more strict expectations and decorum of her home in San Antonio. No doubt the experience served her well in her marriage to a homegrown, Oklahoma farm boy.

When young, Louise dedicated her energy and time to her husband, Hershel, and her four children, but she also worked for many years as a secretary to Father Edward Dworaczyk, the first pastor of St. Margaret Mary's, and later as a leading sales representative for Avon. A favorite outing was dancing at The Roaring 20's, where she and Hershel would jitterbug the night away with neighbors and friends. Later in life they joined a square-dance club and she added matching his and her square dance costumes to her repertoire of sewing skills. She enjoyed cards, Bunco, and Chickee with her neighbors and friends, and was a somewhat dubious but steadfast partner on camp trips to Garner State Park, the Coast, and road trips to visit family in Oklahoma. She loved our family pups, calling them by silly names like Houndest Doggest and feigning disapproval when they snuck into the house.

Louise was a member of the St. Margaret Mary's Altar Society, the Double Ring Club, Harlandale HS Co-Wi Club, San Antonio Conservation Society, and the Highland Hills Neighborhood Association.

To her grandchildren she was Nana, and later Great Nana to her great-grandchildren. They undoubtedly credit her with their sweet tooth and will remember her droll sense of humor, unexpected, random silliness that had us roaring with laughter, recitations of poems passed-down generations ago in a distinctive, sing-song voice. Adventures at the Canyon Lake house with Hershel by her side, making cascarones during Fiesta, trips to the San Antonio Zoo, the guilty pleasures to be had eating at El Tipico and her stash of sweets in the china cabinet. Part of her lives on through her progeny and her name. There are now five generations of Louises, from her great-grandmother, Luisa Garza Stille to her great-granddaughter, Luisa Oveisi.

Louise will be fondly remembered as someone who was a model of propriety, reserved, exacting, and polite, always stylishly and fastidiously dressed and equally attentive to the appearance of her home, much of it owing to her skills as a seamstress. She was steadfast in her relationships, dedicated to her aging parents, a supportive presence at all of Coach Adkisson's Friday night basketball games at Harlandale High School, and on outings with neighborhood families, and had a remarkable record for remembering loved ones with a phone call or a birthday card. She accompanied Hershel, her kids and grandkids to campaign kickoffs, dance recitals, baseball and basketball games, concerts, graduations (Hook 'em, Horns!) on vacations, cruises, baptisms, weddings and innumerable birthday parties and holiday events. That diligent presence in our lives is how she loved us best. Vigilant as a mother, she stayed up late, not just to be sure her teenage kids were safe and home on time, but often to talk.

She stayed with us for a very long time, talking, of late still remembering decades-old events and people, reminding us to be good, keep your chin up, and that everything is going to be okay. May she rest now as we take up the vigil.

Louise's life will be celebrated at St. Gerard's Catholic Church, 1523 Iowa Street in San Antonio on March 24: Visitation: 11:00-12:30, Rosary: 12:30, and Mass: 1:00. Graveside services are at Fort Sam National Cemetery at 2:30 pm Shelter 3. The services will be live-streamed on the St. Gerard Catholic Church Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/StGerardChurchSA/>

Note regarding COVID precautions: Please be cautious about the health and safety of others. There is a 70 person maximum allowed at the church, only small groups will be allowed within 6 feet of space between sitting and standing. Everyone must wear a mask. Fort Sam Cemetery limits the graveside gathering to 50 people.

In lieu of flowers the family requests that donations be made to St. Gerard's High School or charity of your choice.

Cemetery Details

Ft. Sam Houston National Cemetery

1520 Harry Wurzbach
San Antonio, TX 78209

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 24. 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM (CT)

St. Gerard Catholic Church
1523 Iowa St.
San Antonio, TX

Rosary

MAR 24. 12:30 PM (CT)

St. Gerard Catholic Church
1523 Iowa St.
San Antonio, TX

Funeral Mass

MAR 24. 1:00 PM (CT)

St. Gerard Catholic Church
1523 Iowa St.
San Antonio, TX

Tribute Wall

JM

“ *Commissioner Adkisson, what a beautiful mother you had. My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. It was just last week at the Bexar Heritage Center you were sharing the rich history of your family, and by reading Mary's obituary, it clearly celebrates it! May your family's legacy live on through you.*



Juliette Moke

Juliette Moke - April 01, 2021 at 10:23 AM

TA

Julie, Just did discover your kind comments that you shared upon my mother's passing. You are a great friend to me and ambassador for our County. Many thanks for your endless, great work! Tommy Adkisson

Tommy Adkisson - April 30, 2023 at 12:53 PM

CC

“ *Charles Adkisson & Margaret Condell purchased the Sweet Solace Spray for the family of Mary Louise Adkisson.*



Charles Adkisson & Margaret Condell - March 21, 2021 at 04:28 PM