



Evelyn Orine Keys

January 19, 1918 - February 25, 2017

Evelyn Orine (Thomas) Keys, or "Nanaw" to her family and friends, a longtime resident of Huntsville, Texas, passed away peacefully Saturday the 25th of February, 2017.

She is survived by her son John Rayford Keys and wife Betty of Huntsville, three grandchildren Russell Everett Keys and wife Sheryl of Huntsville, Karen Denise Keys of Irving and Jonathan Weldon Keys of Huntsville, two great-grandchildren Jakson Russell Keys and Avery True Keys, and a niece Glenda Mae Hostetter of Humble, Texas. She was preceded in death by her husband Rayford Wilbur Keys, father Simpson Thomas, mother Evelora Miles, step-father James Miles and sister Glennice (Miles) Smith.

Born in 1918 in Richards, Texas, Evelyn grew up in the Bays Chapel community with the Hoke family. She graduated from Richards High School in 1936 and attended Sam Houston State Teacher's College. She lived and worked in Huntsville until WW II when she moved to Houston with her family. In Houston, she worked in the shipyards until the end of the war. It was after the war, when she returned to Huntsville that Evelyn met Rayford Keys and married him in 1945. They had one son, John Rayford Keys born in 1947. Evelyn's husband died unexpectedly in 1968 but she never remarried.

Evelyn was an independent woman and worked several jobs throughout her

life, most notably at King's Drug Store where she sold cosmetics for 14 years and at Kerr's Department Store where she worked until her retirement in 2006. Evelyn was also an avid fisherman, gardener, and baseball fan. If the Astros or Braves were on, you can be sure she was watching.

When her son married and had children of his own, she became an integral part of their lives, sharing many of her interests with them. John and his family moved into the family home that Evelyn's stepfather had built on Montgomery Rd, and she moved into an apartment on the same plot of family land. This proximity made morning pick-ups and afternoon drop-offs of her grandchildren for school convenient, but it also ensured that trips to Nanaw's house were an easy walk down the "Red Rock Road." Visits from her grandchildren were frequent and later included their friends who adopted her as their own "Nanaw." Her home was open to all with an offer for a cold drink or a meal. More than anything she lived for her grandchildren. Through the years she attended hundreds soccer, baseball, softball and football games. No matter home or away, rain or shine, she was in the stands cheering on her grandchildren.

In her later years after retirement, Nanaw invented reasons to "go to town" in the hopes of running into any of her old Kerr's customers. She was a "people person" that enjoyed catching up on the latest news. She touched many people's lives and will be dearly missed.

Services will be held Tuesday, February 28th at 10 AM at Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home. Interment will follow at Adickes Addition of Oakwood Cemetery. The family will receive friends Monday the 27th from 5-7 PM at the funeral home.

The family would like to thank Huntsville Health Care Center for their love and care given to Evelyn during her stay there for the past four years. They would

also like to thank Heart to Heart Hospice for their assistance during her final days.

For those wishing to do so, memorial donations may be made to the Wesley Memorial Methodist Church or charity of your choice.

Full obituary may be viewed and memorial condolences made to the family at www.shmfh.com.

Cemetery Details

Adickes addition of Oakwood Cemetery

700 Martin Luther King Blvd
Huntsville, TX

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 27. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home - Huntsville
1700 Normal Park Dr.
Huntsville, TX 77340
(936) 291-7300
belinda@shmfm.com

Funeral Service

FEB 28. 10:00 AM (CT)

Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home - Huntsville
1700 Normal Park Dr.
Huntsville, TX 77340
(936) 291-7300
belinda@shmfm.com

Tribute Wall



“ *Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Evelyn Orine Keys*



Sam Houston Memorial Funeral Home - February 27, 2017 at 08:09 AM



“ *Evelyn Orine Keys*

November 15, 2022 at 08:33 PM



“ *Evelyn was our neighbor when I was growing up in the 1940s-50s. She was always so friendly and kind. It was always a joy to see her in King's and Kerr's. Please accept my sincere sympathy on your loss. She was a lovely lady and a wonderful role model.*

Montie Belle Burns Shelton

Montie Shelton - March 02, 2017 at 08:43 AM



“ *Vicki and I are so sorry to hear of Miss Evelyn's passing. She was always a joy to be around and no Grandmother ever loved her Grandkids more than Miss Evelyn did!! She was a jewel of a person.*
JD and Vicki

JD Vicki Davis - March 01, 2017 at 05:42 PM

JH

“ I had the blessing of enjoying visits with her a Kerrs. We always talked fishing, family, a God. A true jewel. I sometimes went to shop to visit her. Always happy. Jan Hill

Jan I. Hill - March 01, 2017 at 07:39 AM

CN

“ To all the Keys family, Mike and I are so sorry for your loss. Evelyn was such a dear neighbor and friend. She loved you all so very much. She was such a giving, loving person and I always enjoyed visiting with her about her family and her activities wherever we met. She always wanted to know how we and our family were doing. I have many special memories of Amy and Russell playing in that big dirt pile beside the apartments and she always had plenty of Mello Yellow for them to drink. Those were fun times!! Our thoughts are prayers are with you all.
Carol and Mike Nichols

Carol Nichols - February 28, 2017 at 07:09 PM

VC

“ Ray, we are so sorry for the loss of your mother. She was a delightful to visit with when see her at Kerr's. We are out of town right now but our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family.
John and Virginia Cooper.

Virginia Cooper - February 28, 2017 at 10:27 AM

LF

“ Mrs. Keys is a favorite memory of my childhood.

Linda Wells Farmer - February 28, 2017 at 08:55 AM

SJ

“ Betty, I am so very sorry for your family's loss. I remember your mother-in-law so well. My mother and I would often stop at Kerr's just to visit with her. What a blessing she was to so many people in Huntsville. Shirley Jackson

Shirley jackson - February 28, 2017 at 01:49 AM



“ Amazing Arboricola was purchased for the family of Evelyn Orine Keys.



February 27, 2017 at 10:47 AM

G(

“ My prayers are with the entire Keys family. Such a find lady that enjoyed life and all the sporting events with her grandchildren. To Russell, Karen and John, thank you for sharing your Nanaw with all the students at Huntsville High school. She was quite a lady.

Ginger Scott (Wallace)

Ginger Scott (Wallace) - February 27, 2017 at 08:56 AM

SS

“ Ray, I am so sorry for your loss. I always enjoyed visiting with your mom when I shopped at Kerr's. She was a great lady. I know that she will be missed. You and your children are so fortunate that you had her in your life for so long. Prayers for your family.
Suzanne Spruiell

Suzanne Spruiell - February 27, 2017 at 08:26 AM

MW

“ I am sorry for your loss. Your family is in my thoughts and prayers. When I think of Evelyn I think of her smiling face at Kerr's where she would always greet you and would always offer to help everyone.



Mellicent Sikes Wiley - February 26, 2017 at 10:05 PM

PS

“ Pat & Sue Sprott lit a candle in memory of Evelyn Orine Keys



Pat & Sue Sprott - February 26, 2017 at 08:10 PM

JH

“ I worked with Ms. Evelyn at Kerr's while I was in highschool. She was sweet as could be but also tough as nails. She was always trying to feed us kids and sneaking us chocolate from the display by her register. ❤️

Julie Hlozek - February 26, 2017 at 07:25 PM

PK

How we all that worked for the County loved Mrs Keys, she was a wonderful friend and we loved her very much ❤️💕💕💕

peggy Kroesche - February 26, 2017 at 08:48 PM

RF

“ Mrs. Evelyn was one of my favorite ladies throughout my life. She dressed me for years. 😊 While my aunt was at HHCC I would often stop and hug her neck and visit for a few minutes and she always had a smile for me. RIP sweet lady!!

Robyn Flowers - February 26, 2017 at 07:22 PM

LW

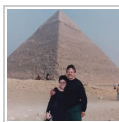
“ Ray,
I am so saddened by the news about your mother. She was a complete joy to know. She always had a smile and a twinkle in her eye...and our lives are much richer because we knew her. We were so lucky to have grown up where we did and when we did and to have been guided by such loving adults like your Mom.

Lynne Werner - February 26, 2017 at 06:12 PM

MH

“ Ray ...I am so sorry to heard about your mom. She was a wonderful lady and I was sure blessed by knowing her. You are so lucky to have had her for so long. My thoughts and prayers are with you. Remember the good times and they will get you thru the bad.
Mary Beth Kaltwasser Van Horn

Mary Beth Kaltwasser Van Horn - February 26, 2017 at 06:03 PM



Our heart aches for you and your family during this time. Your mother was such an amazing person and she will truly be missed. Our condolences.

Bert Childers - February 26, 2017 at 07:53 PM

AB

Oh I am so saddened by this news. I am so grateful that I was fortunate to meet and get to know Ms. Evelyn while we worked together at Kerr's when it was downtown. We laughed. We cried. And she taught me so much. I can still hear her laughter and see her smile. She is an amazing women. I love her so much and I will truly miss her. May we all be comforted by our sweet memories of our dear friend Evelyn.

Anita Crowson Bell - February 26, 2017 at 09:53 PM

PG

Ray, my heart is so sad...not for your mom- she's having a beautiful time with her new adventures...but for you and your family. You were so blessed to have her here with you as long as you did. Love you, and send my prayers.

Pat Gilder

Pat Gilder - February 26, 2017 at 11:12 PM