

Meme to Many

By Kylee Medina

Growing up, there are people in your life who are irreplaceable because of the impact they have had on you. For me, Velda Sanders, or as I call her "Meme", is one of those people. My Meme is one who I could always count on to be in the stands cheering me on a basketball game, watching me run, or bringing my favorite chocolate sheet cake to family holidays. As I called and talked to her for this interview, I was able to learn more about her life, have a few laughs, and hang up the phone feeling appreciative that I've been able to know her for 18 years.

The youngest of four girls, Veda Violet Black was born on January 10, 1933 at her home in Mount Olive. However, she soon moved to Star, Texas where she went to school, worked, and now resides today. Growing up, she played basketball and was a defensive player as the sport was only half court at the time. She married Bill Sanders in 1950 and they had two boys: Edward Sanders (my grandfather) and Glendon Sanders. During this time Bill was a carpenter so he and Velda moved with the job for the next several years. However, when their oldest son, Edward, was about to start school, Velda moved back to Star so the boys could attend, and graduate from, the school she loved.

When I asked Velda about the technology that was available during those times, the first thing she remembered was when she was little and they got their first refrigerator. She says she especially remembers her mother saying, "Don't be standing there with the refrigerator door open, you're letting the cold air out!" She then talked about wanting her first computer, and even though Bill wasn't too fond of the idea, he eventually gave in and got her one but he said if she was sitting there at the computer all the time she would need to step away so she could enjoy the outdoors. "Technology," she said, "is so much more advanced these days. Now I have to get someone to help me figure out how to work my telephone!"

After her two kids had grown up and had families of their own, Velda continued to have kids at her house as she was one of the people at Star who participated in the exchange student program. She had three exchange students over the next three years; one from England, and the other two from Iceland. When I asked her about her exchange students she remarked, "Oh lands, that was a good time!" Two of her exchange students have been back to visit as Star obviously left an impact on them. While talking about her exchange students she told me a story of a girl from Lometa who went to school at Star. After her house burnt down, and her family decided to move away she asked Velda if she could stay with her so she could graduate from the school she loved. Velda said she was welcome to stay as she still had the extra room in her house fixed up that one housed her exchange students. For the rest of that year, whenever someone asked, she would jokingly tell them that she had an exchange student from Lometa" living with her.

Today, you can find Velda Sanders still living in Star, Texas. At 87 years old, she enjoys going on trips with the Texas Travellers as well as the occasional gambling trip. After talking with her on the phone for my interview, I laughed when she called me back an hour later because there was one thing that she forgot that she wanted to make sure I put in my paper. She said, "I've had a good long life. I've got 2 kids, 5 grandkids, and 9 great-grandkids that I'm really really proud of, and I think I'm the most blessed in the world." As one of her 9 great-grandkids, I am thankful to have had this opportunity to interview her and laugh with her as we talked about her experiences growing up in Mills County. I think it's safe to say that we are all very blessed to have known her too.