

Editor remembers great-grandmother "Mammow Bea"

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March 31, 2011 - On Monday, I was pondering over an idea for a column in honor of my great-grand-mother, Beatrice Lee - affectionately known as Mammow Bea to her grandkids - who was in poor health and not expected to live much longer. That idea changed for me Monday night - to a memorial - when her breathing slowed and eventually stopped. She was 99 years old, and as stubborn as that old woman was, I am surprised that she did not reach her dream of turning 100. She was sitting up and talking to her kids on Saturday insisting that she had to make it to her birthday on October 30 - though she believed it was September already.

Mammow was born in 1911, the year before the Titanic sank, and back during a time when life, from my perspective, seemed more simple. She was one of nine kids - six boys and three girls - and her parents were sharecroppers. She was a teenager through the Roaring Twenties and began a family - having six kids in all - during The Great Depression. She was alive during the attack on Pearl Harbor and World War II and knew what hard work was. It seems that many who come from that era possess a determination, stubbornness and work ethic like none other - and she fit the bill. Most of the five daughters that she leaves behind all portray the same strong will that their mother did, as well as some in the younger generations.

While her kids were in school, Mammow worked in the Warren school cafeteria serving lunches, and at one point waited tables to help put food on the table for her family of eight. Later, after the kids and her husband were gone, she worked in home health taking care of homebound people in her community, and spent many years taking care of herself. In fact, it was like pulling teeth to convince her that she couldn't do it by herself anymore and needed to go to a nursing home or assisted living facility a couple of years ago. It hadn't been too long before that time that she was still driving herself around in her gold Oldsmobile Ciera - though not always safely.

She suffered some hard times in recent years with the death of a son, granddaughter, two great-grandchildren, and two great-great grandchildren, but pressed right along until lately when she became too weak to do much of anything. We will celebrate her 99 years of life this Thursday morning. Though bittersweet, it will be good to see the family together again.