

Alice Marie Gaumont Obituary
March 24, 1903 – May 19, 1997

Alice was born in 1903. No one here can speak from personal experience about Mom's years as a child and young adult, because she has simply outlasted everyone. Since my recollection of her is as a woman in her forties, I took a few minutes to look back at the world she entered. That year there were only 45 United States, and several of them had just recently joined the Union. The Wright Brothers made their first flight that year, and Teddy Roosevelt was president. Model T Fords weren't coming off the assembly line until she was ten years old, and women didn't have the right to vote until she was seventeen. She was a teenager during World War I, and a newlywed during the Great Depression. Having lived through these hard times was probably one reason why she saved everything.

I'd like to tell a few stories that say a little to us all about who she was. These probably aren't the most significant memories, just little peeks into a life that spanned 94 years.

One of my earliest memories was life on Hanson St. and the garden that was her pride and joy. We moved from there when I was six, but I can still remember the garden and her love of growing things. The neighbors even called her the Gallows Hill Farmerette. One of Mom's ways of improving the family's way of life was to fix up a house and buy a better one which she did until she and Dad bought their dream house on Lawrence Street in Danvers. When they lived there, even though she didn't want to mess up the lawn, she still managed to grow wonderful tomatoes on a little strip of dirt next to the garage next door.

When Bob was still pretty young he joined the Merchant Marines and then the Army, and one of the biggest joys in Mom's life was when he would come home for furlough. On special occasions she always made him wear his uniform. He hated it, but she was so proud. Since Jo and I are a little younger than Bob, most of our memories of Mom center around her life in Danvers.

Her main purpose in life was to make a home for her children and bring us up as well as possible. We think she did a pretty good job.

Not just family, but relatives, friends, neighbors and probably people I never even knew about remember her Toll House Cookies. None of us had enough self-control to resist grabbing a fresh cookie when that aroma greeted us at the door, and grandchildren learned quickly that the second cabinet from the left on the bottom shelf was where the treasure chest (also known as the cookie can) was kept.

She and Dad were always available to babysit, so the grandchildren lucky enough to live nearby got to sleep over occasionally. Mom had a group of friends who played cards most Saturday nights. Sometimes when the babysitting happened to be on the same night as the ritual card game, the ladies had to clean up the game a little and call it "Oh Shucks".

The fact that Mom was a perfectionist was one reason we always had a lovely home to bring our friends to. There was a flip side to this, though, that drove all of us crazy, and Jo and I often found the white glove test pretty frustrating. When Dad would protest while painting a wall that a hole was too small to fill, she'd tell him to make it bigger so that he could fill it. There was always a solution to a problem. We didn't always agree with her solutions, but that was a really important part of who she was – there always WAS a solution. Even the toughest problems and disappointments were handled pretty much the same way. Sometimes the solution was as simply as buying a new hat or something larger to help with a change in attitude – hers or Dad's.

Sometimes she was a little slow to adapt to change, but eventually she did. We were amazed when we really did get her to wear pants, and she was in her mid-fifties when I taught her to drive a car. How proud she was of that driver's license.

Eventually maintaining the house at 56 Lawrence Street got to be a little too much for her so she went to live with Jo and stayed with her for eight years. The whole family was grateful to Jo for taking on such a big responsibility. She cared for Mom during her older years, and we all know that at times Jo had to have more patience than most people ever have to muster. During her eighties, though, Mom continued making cookies, caring for Buffy, and started knitting with a passion. When there were no hands that needed warming with her mittens or feet that needed to be kept cozy in her special slippers, she just kept knitting and knitting. The church bazaar loved her.

As her memory got poorer, it became easier for us to find things to talk about because we could tell her the same stories again and again, and she'd enjoy them just as much every time.

When she entered the Greenery at 90, we were all worried about how she'd handle it. We knew she needed to have someone available to her 24 hours a day, but we weren't sure she knew it. I guess she did, though, because she took to the place as though it were the best vacation she ever had. If they'd wanted to advertise, they could have used the picture of her they took when she went to live there. She was more independent and could choose to play Bingo, watch TV, even make cookies with a group. One evening I went to visit her and couldn't find her anywhere. I was told she'd gone to dinner at the Danversport Yacht Club. And one night when Jo stopped by, she was told that Mom was at the dance. She danced with Jo that night, and didn't want to stop.

Today we celebrate her life, we do not mourn her death.

Jackie Brockelbank
5/23/97