



July 14, 2021

Mary Thomson Schmal, died July 2, 2021 at age 99.

Mrs. Schmal was born Mary Elizabeth Thomson in Davenport, Iowa June 8, 1922, to Mungo Chapman Thomson and Mary Elizabeth Smith. She grew up in Hammond, Indiana, attending Catholic schools. In 1944 she married Lt. Gordon Schmal in All Saints Church in Hammond.

Her life as an Air Force wife was filled with new locations, experiences and people. She thrived on these challenges and created a loving home wherever her husband's career took her and the family. Despite her many interests and activities, she was first and foremost a mother and a homemaker. Wherever "home" was, Mary insisted on a family breakfast and family dinners. She raised her family while moving 14 times, serving her country as an Air Force wife. With every move she settled in and developed friendships and gardens as if she intended to stay forever. She and Gordon retired in Shreveport, LA and lived there for 20 years until they moved to Newberry, FL to be near their daughter, Laura Davis.

Working as a nurses' aide during World War II, Mary recognized her interest in caring for the sick; later in life, she became an LPN at the age of 55. She volunteered throughout her entire lifetime for hospitals, libraries, thrift shops and welfare organizations. She was in Toastmasters and Welcome Wagon, served as the librarian in her neighborhood clubhouse, saved stuffed animals for the children in hospitals, and collected books for prisons. She was the first to welcome a new neighbor, celebrate a new baby and remember a friend or loved one's birthday.

Mary was an accomplished quilter, genealogist, and watercolorist. She could play the piano and guitar, enjoyed word games and crossword puzzles. She used computers with gusto. She graduated from a handgun class, but never used her skills, claiming that she never found a suitable or worthy target. She enjoyed movies, plays, music, Jeopardy, and watching the Gators, especially Tim Tebow. Her favorite musician was Robert Goulet. She was an avid shopper; at a yard sale she always asked about an object - "What can you do with it? Where did it come from? Will you take a quarter for it?"

In 1942, she began writing to friends in the military service; during the War, she had seventeen soldiers and sailors on her mailing list. After she had raised her family, Mary wrote her life story, "Odyssey", and had it printed for her grandchildren. She then joined the Life Story group at the Millhopper Library and continued to write humorous essays or what she called "just ramblings". She began and completed another book she called her "Postscripts."

When she was no longer able to garden outdoors, she began filling her house with plants and greenery. She loved dogs, any size, any color and always stopped to pet a friendly one. She never lost her beauty, her sense of humor or her taste for chocolate and love of shopping.

During much of her marriage Mary was both mother and father to her seven children while her husband served his country for months and years in the U.S. and overseas. She is survived by her children, Laura Davis of Gainesville, Mollie Clinkenbeard (Brad), Thomas (Bridget), Anita Melson (Lars), James (Jessica), and Nancy (Vic), 15 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews including a dear niece Sharon Phillips. She was preceded in death by her son Robert, husband Gordon and brothers Thomas and Robert.

The family extends thanks to the Eucharistic Ministers from Holy Faith who served Mary for many years when she was unable to get to Mass.

Celebration of Life Mass will be held at Holy Faith Church at 9:00 a.m. Saturday July 10. Visitation will take place at Forest Meadows Funeral Home from 7-8 pm Friday July 9.