

Mattie Stanfield Fancher



Mattie Stanfield Fancher, a long-time resident of Austin, died peacefully in her home on April 21, 2011 at the age of 105. Mattie loved Austin and enjoyed her residency for over 76 years. She was an avid gardener who had an early influence on the city's beautification projects, including the initial landscaping of Bergstrom Air Force Base and Camp Swift during WWII. She believed that everything should be done in moderation and with patience, and if you have nothing nice to say then say nothing at all. Through the end of her life, Mattie credited her longevity to maintaining a positive attitude, continuous learning, and her love of nature, gardening, family, and faith.

Mattie was born on July 9, 1905 in San Antonio, the youngest of six children. Her two older sisters, Anne and Maybelle, shared her centenarian membership by reaching ages 104 and 110. Her parents highly valued education, insisting that she and her sisters obtain college degrees before marrying. She attended Southwestern University in Georgetown and the University of Texas before graduating from the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio in 1931.

She and her late husband George were married for 64 years. In 1935, they moved to Austin, where they lived in the first fireproof concrete and tile roof house ever built in the city from 1937 until her death. Their unique home and beautiful yard attracted artists and photographers to this exceptional setting. During their life in Austin, George and Mattie maintained strong ties with the University of Texas where George was a tenured professor of Petroleum Engineering for 25 years, serving as Chairman of the Department from 1956 to 1960.

Mattie's love for nature was one of her true passions in life. Her immense knowledge of plants and gardening led her to start the Spade and Trowel Garden Club in 1945. The club spawned over 40 additional neighborhood clubs throughout Austin. She often lectured about gardening best practices and created the Garden Guide pamphlets, detailing responsible gardening techniques long before "going green" became popular. Mattie received many accolades over the years for her work with plants, including an award for outstanding achievement in horticulture and continuing service by the Austin Area Garden Center in May 1986.

At her own home, Mattie worked alongside her gardener, John Pena, for more than 50 years, creating a backyard that represented the gifted woman she was and the values she held dear. Together, the two constructed a beautiful maze of curved beds with a variety of colorful and fragrant plants. Mattie's garden provided a sanctuary for family holidays, gatherings, and weddings over the years for all the people in her life to come together and enjoy one another. She was also a gifted painter and artist, expressing her creativity by beautifully capturing her love of birds, flowers, and landscape on canvas and in ceramics.

As a life-long learner, Mattie kept pace with the world and embraced new ideas. Beginning in her 90's, she learned computer skills to keep up with her family via email. Her incredibly sharp

mind and attention to detail kept her interested in the latest developments in business, politics, architecture, music, investments, and of course, gardening. Her inspiration and life lessons live on in family, friends, and all those whose lives she touched.

She was preceded in death by her loving husband George, her parents, and her siblings. She is survived by her son Charles Fancher and wife Estelle of Austin; her son George Fancher Jr. and wife Carolyn of Horseshoe Bay; her daughter Carol Crowe and husband Tommy of Georgetown; grandchildren: Eric Fancher and wife Emily; Lisa Blonkvist and husband Tim; George Fancher III; Kent Fancher and wife Carol; Karl Fancher and wife Debbie; Jason Crowe and wife Carri; Blake Crowe; Michael Fancher; and Kelly Fancher; and 6 great-grandchildren: Brent , Brittany, and Brady Blonkvist; Justin and Julienna Fancher; and Clara Fancher.

The family would like to extend their sincere gratitude for the compassion and thoughtfulness to all of the caretakers and nurses who provided such excellent care for Mattie at her home including: Lucy Baron, Diane Guerrero, Melody Hall, Elaine Matthews, Becky Ortiz, Diana Timmell and others from Robinson Creek Hospice.

The Visitation will be held from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 28, 2011 at Weed-Corley-Fish Funeral Home, Lamar location. The Memorial service will be held at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, April 29, 2011 at St. David's Episcopal Church, 301 East 8th Street, Austin, Texas 78701. Interment will follow at Austin Memorial Park Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers please make donations to The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, 4801 La Crosse Avenue, Austin, Texas 78739 or St. David's Episcopal Church Foundation, 301 East 8th Street, Austin, Texas 78701.

<http://wcfish.tributes.com/obituary/show/Mattie-Fancher-91314201>