



Alma Erna Dolby

JUN 10, 1915 - DEC 21, 2014



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The cherished only child of Edward and Gertrude Rudy and named after Gertrude's sister, Alma Erna Anna was born June 10, 1915 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. When Alma was about nine, the family moved to Los Angeles, California, and resided in the Bunker Hill community. Bunker Hill towered over downtown Los Angeles and was adorned with lavish two-story Victorian houses. Alma's favorite mode of transport was Angel's Flight, the World's Shortest Railway that traveled a 33% grade down to the famous Grand Central Market where her parents owned and operated a corner restaurant. Alma enjoyed a childhood filled with piano and dance lessons, trips to the movie theatres on Broadway and outings with her parents. They would often vacation in Santa Barbara and at Lake Elsinore, once a popular recreational destination for Hollywood celebrities. Still in high school, a tall, blond, blue-eyed Canadian swept Alma off her feet. To the great heartache of her parents, she eloped with Leonard Dolby at the age of 18. In 1935, Alma gave birth to her first of four daughters; Lenora, followed by Diana, Earlene and her only son Douglas. When Douglas was nine, Alma gave birth to her fourth daughter Suzanne, forever the baby girl. In 1952, the Dolby family moved from the City of Gardena in Los Angeles County to the San Diego community of Normal Heights. Although it was hard moving away from her parents, Leonard's brother and two sisters lived in or near Normal Heights and she enjoyed the extended family relationships. Alma was particularly close to her sister-in-law Violet. Alma was only a couple of months older than Violet and they both ended their life's journey in 2014 with their minds still in tact, and still the best of friends. While in High School, Alma's daughters began attending Normal Heights United Methodist Church. Alma's church family, especially during her golden years, was a great joy and comfort to her. Alma loved to sing and she could whistle like nobody's business. The neighbors always knew when she was cleaning house because she was always singing out like she was on a



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Broadway stage. It's likely she sang while at work with her co-worker and close friend Lorraine. With her children grown, Alma started working at Hawkins Dry Cleaners on University Avenue. She liked her job doing bookkeeping for the cleaners and enjoyed the camaraderie of her colleagues and regular patrons. She continued working even after being robbed a couple of times, once at gunpoint. Leonard built a two-bedroom house in the backyard of their 34th Street home and it became a starter home for many of their kids. Lenora and her husband Ken lived there with their first two children, and Douglas and his wife Carol also lived there with her two girls. The back house also became the final home for many relatives. During the decade of the seventies Alma devoted herself first to her ailing husband, who passed in 1975, and then to her parents who had moved into the back house to be with their daughter in their final years. She also cared for her brother-in-law Arthur who passed away while living in the back house during the early nineties. Alma's greatest gift, and a gift to all family and friends lucky to know her, was her innate ability to care and nurture. She loved people and was a joy to be with. Alma was always upbeat and ready for new experiences and adventures. She traveled, and enjoyed a cruise to the Caribbean with her dear friends Alice and Luther. In the company of her granddaughter Jeanene (aka "Chili") as well as Alice and Luther, Alma ventured on two more cruises; one down from Vancouver, Canada and the other to Mexico. She also enjoyed a trip to New York City, courtesy of her granddaughter Lauren. Alma's life wasn't always easy and there wasn't much money, but she lived with great flair, good humor and grace. She had style! She loved clothes and had great flair in putting a smart look together. She was especially vain about her legs and rightfully so, but her most striking feature was her bright blue eyes. She was lucky to have the health and physical well-being to live in her 34th Street home until the age of 95. Living alone at her advanced age was made easier under the watchful eye of her adopted granddaughter Hollis, who lived in the back house for over a decade. Alma fell and broke her slender ankle but recovered and was able to walk again because of her fierce determination and the aid of physical therapy. Unfortunately she fell again, this time breaking her neck which resulted in Alma being confined to a wheelchair for her remaining years. Although Alma wanted to be in her own home, she was



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quick to make friends and became a staff favorite at the nursing and assisted care residences where she stayed. During her brief stay at Atria Collwood, she, like her father, an incorrigible flirt with the ladies, flirted shamelessly with the male dining room waiters. Her final residence was at Harbor View Chateau where she even had a beau. Cleve returned her affection and they would often hold hands during their meals together. Alma had many visitors and was doted on by her caregivers because she always showed interest in all who came in contact with her and she never failed to thank them for their help. At the advanced age of 99, Alma undoubtedly left this world to enter a heavenly ballroom, greeted by a huge party of family and friends, including her beloved furry companions: Schnitzi, Sissy, Cricket and Bob the cat. She is waltzing around the ballrooms with her many admirers, with a song on her lips and a twinkle in her bright blue eyes. Alma will be greatly missed by many and is survived by her five children, ten grandchildren, her adopted granddaughter, 12 great grandchildren and one great-great grandchild. Alma leaves behind a great legacy of how to live and love without reservation and with great generosity.



Tribute Wall

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Chili Cilch posted:

In remembrance of Alma Dolby – Part II I was in awe of her spiritual devotion. On her first night at Atria Collwood, I stayed the night and shared her queen bed. Before she fell asleep, I listened to her whisper out loud prayers that included just about everyone she knew. After her fall that prevented her from living alone at the 34th street house, my Aunt Sue and I teamed up to care for her. We would introduce ourselves to Alma's doctors, nurses and caregivers as "Team Alma." This turned out to be another gift from Alma, she's the catalyst for the friendship I now shared with her baby girl. Sue and I enjoyed many outings and visits with Alma. We'd take turns pushing her up the hill to enjoy Balboa Park and we'd take her to dinner. We devoted our time to Alma, not out of duty, but because she was a joy to be with. In her final year, the quality of her life greatly declined. She would often not be able to wake for our visits, and communication became more difficult. That's why I started singing to her, at every visit. She'd remember most of the lyrics or would just make them up as we'd sing old songs and hymns. Often the other residents of Harbor View Chateau would join in. That's another lesson, sing, even if you have no talent for it. I'm happy that during my last visit with her, she was sleepy, but perked up to sing "Unforgettable" with me. As many of you know, that was her favorite song and that's how we'll close this service. I hope you'll all join in to serenade her spirit with the Nat King Cole classic. In closing, I want to tell you that Eddie and Gertie came to me in a dream. I was in a crowded market place. I think it might have been LA's Grand Central Market. Grandpa Rudy grabbed me by the wrist and said, "You have to come with me." He took me to an outdoor café where Grandma Rudy was already seated at a round table. I said, "Oh I know what this is about, it's her time isn't it." So I let go of the rope, accepting that it was her time. Her body had become her prison and she was ready to be free. Thank you Alma Dolby for all that you've given and will continue to give to me. I will live out the remainder of my days knowing that you're the angel keeping an eye on me. That means, I'll keep a cleaner house, drink more moderately and try to live each day to its fullest. Jeanene "Chili" Cilch, granddaughter

December 31 at 8:17 AM



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Chili Cilch posted:

In remembrance of Alma Dolby – Part 1 One of my earliest memories is when my parents lived in the 34th Street back house. I would wake before my parents and Alma would greet me at her back porch door and she'd make me breakfast. I remember visiting her at Hawkins Cleaners and her Sunday night Fried Chicken dinners with mash potatoes and lima beans. I remember she was a loving grandma, generous with her hugs and kisses. I'm not certain when she became more than a grandma. When exactly, she became my best friend. I do know that when we took our first cruise together, spending about a week being cabin mates, that I really got to know her. Our bond wasn't one only forged by blood, it was a bond of shared sensibilities, humor and interests. I'd often forget that she was old. I remember when we flew to Vancouver and took the Ferry to Victoria, we had to lug our suitcases up a slight hill to our hotel. I'd look back and saw her struggling and remember, oh yeah, she's your granny she needs some help with that. I wish there were smart phones back then so I could've recorded the stories she told me about her youth and her parents. I remember being a little scared of grandma Rudy. Gertie didn't come off as warm and outgoing as grandpa Rudy. Alma told me she was jealous of her husband, who had easily won the hearts of all the great grandkids. If only I could time travel to hang out with the Rudy's. They seemed to have a real zest and talent for living. While we all remember Eddie flirting with waitresses, Alma told me that her mom had many gentlemen admirers. Alma enjoyed an ideal childhood and she adored her parents and in her final years, especially when she was in the hospital, Eddie and Gertie were always at her side. Sometimes I felt I was in a tug o war with them, me trying to heal her body, and they trying to take her soul. My relationship with Alma deepened when my dear friend Hollis moved into the back house. We spent lots of time together and we had our Christmas Eve ritual of attending church, eating Alma's bean soup and opening the stocking presents we had bought for each other. Around 2000, Alma's eyesight began failing and we had to take her car keys away. That was hard. She loved to drive and valued her independence. I decided that I would take her to church every Sunday, because I knew how much she cherished her Church community. She loved to sing her hymns and I'd try to sing with her but it wasn't always easy. It was also a great privilege to get to know Alma's sister in-law Violet and her brother in-law John, who also began attending church with us. Alma's warmth and genuine interest in everyone she met made her a people magnet. She was loved by so many. Alma taught me many lessons. The importance of caring for others and to freely dole out hugs and kisses. She taught me patience, because I had to have patience to watch her slowly eat a Costco hot dog while sitting in my car. Alma had an open heart that was willing to let go of old ways, and embrace the new. I was proud of her for voting 'No' on prop 8, the one that restricted the rights of gay people to marry. The one thing I wish I could've learned from her was how to whistle. She was a damn good whistler. –
Continue to next posting for Part II

December 31 at 8:16 AM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Alma by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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