

## EULOGY - Orleana Mae "Klickie" (Klickman) Thornton

May 31, 1920 - March 16, 2020

HOW DO YOU SUMMARIZE AND CAPTURE THE 100 YEAR LIFE OF KLICKIE THORNTON? First, we need to acknowledge that only .0173 percent of all Americans live to be a hundred.

- It has been my privilege to have been the pastor of five church members, who celebrated their one hundredth birthday; one dear soul, Cora B. Gentry lived 113 years, and at the time of her death was the oldest living female in the United States.
  - People in general are living longer, which is probably the result of medical science & better diet.

WE ALSO NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT A PERSON'S LIFE IS OFTEN SHAPED BY THE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH IT IS LIVED. If you stopped and consider all of the major events of history that took place during Klickie's life-time, it is mine bobbling.

- Nine months after Klickie made her debut into this world, the 19<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment gave Women the right to vote.
- Likewise, in the year of her birth, the Prohibition Era began, which was a ban on the production, importation, transportation & sale of alcoholic beverages, & brought in the roaring twenties.
- Eleven days before her seventh birthday, on May 20, 1927 at 7:52 a. m., twenty-five-year-old pilot Charles Lindbergh flew none-stop across the Atlantic Ocean landing in Paris, France, 33½ hours later.
- When she was nine years old, The Great Depression began with the fall of the Stock Market on October 29, 1929, & lasted through the 1930's, affecting the lives of all Americans.
- Before her tenth birthday, on March 17, 1930, construction on the Empire State Building began & was opened to the public on May 1, 1931, thirty days before her eleventh birthday.

- The New Deal, under President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, brought relief to all Americans by bringing the economy of this nation back to within normal ranges, affecting the families of this nation, among which was the Klickman Family.
- Klickie lived through the era of the Dust Bowl, which began in 1932 when 14 dust storms were recorded on the Plains, & by 1934 100 million acres of farmland had lost all or most of their topsoil to the winds.
- Somewhere at the end of her college career, the Holocaust, which began in January, 1940, and lasted for the duration of WWII, killed a total of 17+ million people
- In her 21<sup>st</sup> year, the Day that went down in infamy for our country occurred, when on December 7, 1941, Japanese fighters, bombers & torpedo planes attack Pearl Harbor on a quiet Sunday morning; leaving 2,402 Americans killed & 1282 wounded.
- By that time Klickie was a young woman, she was living in the middle of WWII days, seeing the women of this nation take the place of men in the factories, since the vast majority of able-bodied men were drafted to fight in that war.
- She was also around to see the first African-American play professional baseball in this country, a young man named Jackie Robinson, who became a part of the old Brooklyn Dodgers.
- On May 8, 1945, Klickie probably heard the church bells of our nation ringing, as this country celebrated VE Day, when the Nazi's war machine was defeated, & WWII ended.
- During this period of her life, she had a whirlwind courtship with a young Lt. Col. Clark Thornton, & soon found herself living the life of a military wife, living through the upheaval of the Korean & Vietnam Wars, two so-called skirmishes that took the lives of so many of our young men & women.

- Just one month shy of her 41<sup>st</sup> year, Soviet Cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin made history on April 12, 1961, when he became the first person in the world to enter outer space; less than a year later, the United States matched that accomplishment.
- She probably watched on TV as riots took place in a neighborhood called Watts, Los Angeles, California, a civil disturbance lasting from August 11 to August 15 in 1962, causing 34 deaths & 1,032 injuries, plus 40 million dollars' worth of damage, and kicked off the Civil Rights Era.
- The famed Civil Rights Act became effective July 2, 1964, which I'm sure brought a profound amount of pressure on military families like Klickie & Clark.
- Klickie lived through the turbulent sixties, the interesting seventies, the AIDS epidemic of the 80's & the first assassination attempt of a Roman Catholic Pope on May 13, 1981, 18 days before her 61<sup>st</sup> birthday.
- She made it pass the great Y2K, when everyone thought the change from 1999 to 2000 would cause a complete computer shutdown & disaster for the world's digital future - We can now say it was much ado about nothing.

IN REGARD TO THE HISTORICAL SCOPE OF HER LIFE, SHE LIVED IN ONE OF THE MOST RAPIDLY CHANGING TIMES OF OUR NATION AND THE WORLD, BUT JUST THINK HOW RICH HER LIFE HAS BEEN:

Beginning with her simple years as a farm girl in Port Clinton, Ohio, to becoming the wife of a military man in 1946 from which issued four children, 8 grandchildren & 15 great-grandchildren.

- She obviously was smart, graduating high school at 16, putting herself through college at the University of Toledo, where she became a member of Tau Delta Sigma Sorority.

- She toured the world with her husband, which is one of the perks of the military life.
- She has been a schoolteacher & a guidance counselor, becoming the first such counselor at the Brookwood HS.
- She was one of the 1<sup>st</sup> United Airlines Stewardesses.
- She was a daughter, a sister, a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a great-grandmother.
- She was a strong woman of faith, immersing herself in the life of this congregation called St. Mark UMC.

AS ONE OF HER SEVERAL PASTORS, I WAS PRIVILEGED TO SHARE A GOODLY AMOUNT OF TIME WITH HER THROUGH OUR YOUNG AT HEART GROUP, CONSISTING OF OUR OLDER ADULTS WHO LIKE TO GAD ABOUT & FIND THE BEST PLACE TO EAT. Klickie was one of the first ones on the church bus, as we made our trips to various and sundry places across West Alabama.

- She always showed up for my Wednesday Night Classes, contributing very astute and learned responses to the discussion of Biblical matters.
  - Even when she could not drive herself, friends such as Jerry & Kay Culton saw to it that she had transportation.

EARLY ON IN OUR ACQUAINTENCAE, KCLICKIE WAS IN THE HOSPITAL WHEN IT CAME MY DAY TO VISIT AS THE PASTOR OF THE DAY. I approached the front desk where you acquired patient room numbers & asked the location of Klickie Thornton. The response was that... *"We do not have a Klickie Thornton."* I responded by saying, *"I know you do, because I just got off the phone with her"* *"Well, I'm sorry, unless you can give me a valid first name, I cannot give you any information about our patients."* Not to be deterred, I called the church office & asked the secretary to give me "Klickie" Thornton's real name.

IT WAS THEN & ONLY THEN THAT I DISCOVERED THAT OUR "KLICKIE" WAS ACTUALLY ORLENA MAE KLICKMAN THORNTON.

- We had a good laugh over that incident.

I CANNOT BEGIN TO TELL YOU, AS A FAMILY, WHAT A PLEASURE IT HAS BEEN TO HAVE BEEN ONE OF HER MANY PASTORS OVER THE YEARS. I assume she commended them and their ministry here at Saint Mark, as she often did of me.

**ORLENA MAE KLICKMAN THORNTON:** A woman of broad experiences, well-rounded education, a deep & abiding faith, light-hearted & jovial nature, graced our lives for just over a hundred years.

- There simply is no way to do justice to her meaningful & full life, but I pray that we will all remember her well, as we tell Klickie stories around our family tables in the years to come.
  - Her remains will soon find their resting place beside her beloved husband, Clark, at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, but her spirit we commend to Almighty God.