

REMEMBERING PRISCILLA



**Priscilla Ann Pilliod
1942-2022**

Priscilla Pilliod, of McKinney, Texas died on Wednesday, September 14, 2022. The cause of death was organ failure, aggravated by COVID-19. She had given specific instructions that there be no funeral or memorial service because, in her words, “Those gatherings always make me sad, and I want my friends to remember me with smiles, not tears.” She simply hated funerals. She had donated her body to UT Southwestern Medical School to assist medical research, and her cremated remains will then be returned to the family.

Born Priscilla Ann Thomas on June 19, 1942 in Cooper, Delta County, Texas, she was the daughter of Weldon Woodrow Thomas and Glenna Faye Banks Thomas. She spent her early childhood in the remote west Texas town of Valentine, where her father was stationed with the United States Border Patrol.

As a teenager she lived in the Casa View area of east Dallas, attending W.H. Gaston Junior High and Bryan Adams High School. It was at Gaston in the ninth grade that she met her future husband, Joseph Lee Pilliod. The couple dated throughout their time as students, eventually marrying after graduation from college. They enjoyed 66 wonderful years together, 59 of those as husband and wife. Early on, they decided to celebrate two anniversaries each year: their wedding (June 1) and their first date (December 21.)

After honing her acting talents on the high school stage, Priscilla went on to receive her Bachelor’s Degree in Speech and Drama from North Texas State College (now the University of North Texas), where she was a member of Chi Omega sorority. She then

obtained her teaching certificate and taught first grade at Annie Webb Blanton Elementary School in Dallas for ten years. During this period she used her weekends to attend East Texas State College (now Texas A&M Commerce), earning her Master's Degree in Education.

Priscilla had many talents. She was an exceptional seamstress, and as a 14-year-old student she designed the very first uniform for the Bryan Adams Drill Team during the school's initial year. Recently she was pleased to learn that the uniform design, with only minor modifications, was still in use after 66 years! Her sewing skills were later put to use as she toured the country giving classes in the art of machine embroidery. She was an accomplished artist in oils and acrylic paints, establishing her own business in art instruction and publishing three art books derived from her classes. Her art talent extended into photography, where she assisted her husband in the operation of their portrait studio in Plano.

Throughout her life her real passion was cooking, and wherever she lived she shared her recipes and her delicious food with friends and neighbors. For several years she served as an assistant to celebrity chefs who came to Dallas to give personal demonstrations at various locations, and she got to know many well known chefs by preparing the raw ingredients before the show and cleaning up afterwards. In her home kitchen, Priscilla excelled at cooking, baking and canning. Her renowned Green Cake was declared the "National Dessert of the Plano East High School Drama Department" and her homemade jellies became highly prized gifts to hundreds of hard workers she came in contact with. She gave jelly to every doctor and nurse who helped her, be it a simple office visit or major surgery. New doctors were polite not to ask, but admitted they were looking forward to helping her. Barbers and hairdressers, grocery clerks, food servers, repairmen...anyone she felt did an exceptional job got a jar of jelly from this dear lady who just loved to give her creations away to deserving people.

Always finding time for socializing and fun, Priscilla joined a bridge club in Plano when she and Joseph first moved there in 1969, and the club members became among her dearest friends. That group of ladies still meets regularly, having remained close for more than 50 years. Priscilla loved to travel, and she and Joseph enjoyed visiting 38 countries on four continents before unpacking their bags for the last time.

In 1985 she embarked on a new career as a Realtor. Never a slow starter, she earned multiple honors and awards her very first year and never slowed down. While representing an internationally known broker in the late 1990s she was recognized as the company's top producer in Texas and number eight in the country for her number of buyer-represented units sold that year. She continued to remain at or near the top of her profession for 25 years.

Despite all of her achievements in business, her career came to an abrupt halt in October of 2010 when a dentist's injection caused her eyesight to fail in just a few hours, due to severe damage to the optic nerve. She was totally blind initially, but prompt action by the team of ophthalmology doctors at UT Southwestern in Dallas

restored about five percent of very limited eyesight. She had no central vision but could vaguely determine images peripherally, could see no color, and could no longer read her vast collection of cookbooks.

But she never gave up, never gave in, and never looked back. The ladies of her bridge club continued to invite her to attend the monthly gatherings even after she could not see the cards, for they just wanted her to be there! She obtained a viewing device that allowed her to read her recipes at extensive magnification, about two or three words at a time, so she continued to run her kitchen with the same efficiency as before, often preparing full multi-course dinners for up to 14 guests at a time. When someone asked her what it was like to be legally blind, she smiled and replied, "It's a big inconvenience." Word of her positive attitude spread among her friends and even in the food community, eventually resulting in a personal one-on-one meeting with Chef Emeril Lagasse in New Orleans. They had not previously met, and it was hard to tell who was more excited that day, for as they each entered the room, and before Priscilla could speak, Chef Emeril said, "Priscilla, I have been looking forward to meeting you." He was a true gentleman addressing an amazing lady!

Priscilla contracted COVID-19 in June, 2022, and within a few weeks the disease had robbed her of her remaining eyesight. Then the virus spread to other areas, unseen by even sophisticated medical tests until it was too late. She is survived by her husband Joseph, son Cason, his wife Tonia, grandson Lanam, daughter Haven Vrba, granddaughter Daisy Garcia, great-granddaughters Avery and Penelope, grandson Bailey Vrba, brother Woodrow Thomas and wife Karin, brother-in-law Jim Pilliod and wife JoAnn, Priscilla's cat, Poppy, and lots of friends and relatives scattered throughout the country.

Priscilla will be missed by many, for she was forever attractive, ladylike, graceful, witty, intelligent, very well read, and worldly. She was an actress, a leader, an educator, and a superb salesperson. She was a positive influence on her students, her co-workers, her family, and a generation of young adults who wanted to be like her. She was definitely one of a kind.