

Leta's Eulogy
By her son, William Lewis Bahn

Here I am Lord, what a description of Leta's life. Full of joy, always there for family friends church and community. Truly an inspiration and role model for others.

She started life on a small farm in Iron county that grew mostly rocks. I have heard the stories of using the spring as their refrigerator, bartering with farm products and trees because they did not have cash money. Riding to school on the old plow horse with Freeman and Bill and then turning the horse loose to find its way home. The family finally had to move to Cape in 1938 when Grampa's health started to fail and he could not work the farm. Imagine coming to the big city with almost nothing and starting up a boarding house to make a living. Surely Leta got some of her organizational skills and positive attitude to take on tough projects from her mother. Grandma Lewis's vision to see what could be accomplished against overwhelming odds had to set the stage for Leta's later accomplishments.

Newlyweds Judy and Art Jackson started housekeeping in that boarding house on N Henderson.

With the outbreak of World War II, her three older brothers joined the service. Frank to the navy shipping out to Tinian by Guam where they launched the Enola Gay, Francis to become an Army air corps pilot flying fuel over the Hump in the China Burma theater. He piloted a C-109, the tanker conversion of a B24. Freeman was a corporal in the signal corps on Guam. (He was on duty when they dropped the bomb on Hiroshima). Her sister Frieda married Truman Howard a marine who served in the pacific. (He claimed that as paymaster they protected him but that's not how I remember the marines working.) Grandma and Grampa Lewis took over Wimpy's restaurant from Freeman and Leta and Bill help run it after school and holidays. A Cape Girardeau Institution on the corner of Kingshighway and Cape Rock for years and know for its great "wimpy burgers" until it closed. Her brother Bill reopened on South Kingshighway and continued the tradition until 1997.

About my dad,

The story goes that Leta first went out with the very dapper Lawrence Bahn during the flood of 43 when he took her canoeing though the then flooded

Bahn Brothers' Hardware store. Her diary states that she went out with him again in March of 44 and that quote, that Lawrence can call again! She did not have quite as good of things to say about numerous other acquaintances. Her last entry in that short diary was of meeting up with friends including Larry for some swimming and dancing, somehow ending up by the end of the night with two black eyes and stating in her diary that she thought it was over with Bahn. Luckily for me this was not the case as they got together a few years later, while she was working in St Louis for Frigidaire, getting married June 18, 1949.

Before I was born she and my dad used to take the nieces and nephew out to the cabin at Taylor Oaks while my dad was building our house. They would roast hot dogs over a campfire and stay in the cabin with no running water. My early recollections were that we always had activities to do. I don't think Winie the poo's house at two corners had anything on us. Stories were told that we would occasionally get away in the 20 acre wood and our dog tiger would find us and brings us back. On the rare occasion when Leta would get upset with her angelic children, Tiger was reputed to stand between us keeping her away, what a dog!

She always took and active role in our lives. When we moved to Bellville IL while father completed his PHD at Wash U, She found time to be President of the PTA and be a cub scout den mother all while teaching full time to help make ends meet. I still remember her making 20' high banners of the Three Wise Man for the School Christmas program.

Leta loved to entertain, Carol Koepple once remarked that one day she had a luncheon party, went out and played three sets of tennis only to return and have a dinner party for 30. Now that's some organization! She and my dad loved to play tennis and built themselves a tennis court for their 25th wedding anniversary. Intimidating at the net she was a force to be reckoned with into her seventies.

She set new standards for the role of women. She and Dorothy Penzel were the first two women elected to the board of Elders in this Presbyterian church. Leta went on to expand her role in the church becoming Moderator of the Southeast Missouri Presbytery and then went on to be Moderator of the Newly formed Eliza Lovejoy Parish New Reunited Church Presbytery. She was a delegate to the 199th Presbyterian General Assembly in Biloxi MS

in 1987. Later I remember her showing me an old panoramic black and white photo of her dad as a general assembly delegate over 30 years before.

She continued to step up to the plate working on the Agriculture Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, the fair board, Southeast Hospital Board of Directors, but her crowning achievement was taking Chateau Girardeau from the infancy of its Feasibility study to Chairmen of the Building Committee completing the six million dollar project months ahead of schedule and over \$100,000 under budget. When Presbyterian housing our project consultants wanted to bring in big city architects and contractors she was adamant that we would use are local resources. She had such a repore with the building trades that when the heavy equipment operators union went out on strike, the lone union man from that organization came to her and explained that he had to strike but he would picket at the side gate so as not to interrupt the construction. You won't see that consideration very often.

The Chateau was the first of its kind in this community and has been a blessing to the residents and family that have used it. Col. Don Regenhart USAF was concerned about his mother moving into the facility so he called his sister Alice Lewis to ask her about this Chateau Girardeau Retirement community. She told him that it was build by her sister in law Leta Bahn and the discussion ended there. I have nothing but good things to say about the Chateau and the care that my mother recieved there.

A reluctant farmer after fathers death, she came to relish the term Lady Farmer. Taking an active role in the management of the farm she embarked on an improvement plan of leveling the fields in her Puxico farm bottoms so she could add rice to the plant rotation. The fact that this might have the side effect of improving the duck hunting had absolutely no influence on her sons complete approval of this project. When she visited me in foreign countries she would look at the local rice production and even visited the International Rice Institute in the Philippines. She would also send out rice gift packs at Christmas to encourage friends to eat more rice.

She loved her grandchildren. Babysitting them, taking them on nature walks especially down to the creek looking for crawfish and tadpoles. She showed them the flowers and trees along with recognizing different bird songs. In the kitchen the grandkids were often found covered with flower licking off the beaters and spatula after making a cake or cookies just like their father

and uncle did years before. A competitive athlete herself, she loved going to all, their soccer, T-Ball, tennis and other sports to cheer them on. Even after a lot of her memory was gone Nancy thought she got a smile when relating how Carsen had won a tennis match against one of her friend's granddaughters.

I got her to travel around the world to visit me in many different Duty Stations. Alaska, the Philippines, Japan, Thailand, Cambodia, and even Valdosta GA. I think she liked the Philippines the best. Going to watch me to play polo at the Manila Polo club was fun, but the best was getting her a tennis pro to play with along with a couple of ball boys so they did not have to chase their missed shots. I think she thought she was at Wimpleton. Luckily she never figured out that the noise she heard at night in the compound was not the guards setting off firecrackers. It was with great trepidation and much encouragement from me that I got her to visit while I was on loan to the United Nations in Cambodia. We started out in Thailand with a trek into the hill country north of Chang Mai. The first day was a three and a half hour hike up to a hill tribe village to stay in bamboo huts. She started out saying she was tired after the first steep climb, but then noticed the beautiful Orchids in the trees along the trail and was fine after that. The next day we hiked an hour to the elephant camp where we mounted our pachyderms for another hour down to the river, completing the trip by floating on Bamboo rafts to the takeout point. Heading on to Cambodia, I almost couldn't get her to continue on in country after my boss relayed an old report of Khmer Rouge activity in that area. With more fast talking reminding her that she was a Presbyterian after all, we finally went and it was truly amazing. The temples of Angkor are truly magnificent. Pictures are good but they just can't impart the grandeur of such sites.

The stories of her life are many and can't all be relayed here. I know we each have our own favorite. So as we celebrate her life and the outstanding role model she was, I hope you will remember all of those good times. And that when the time comes when we are faced with that sometimes unwanted opportunity, I hope we can follow her example and say---

Here I am lord, take me.