



Vetra "Tommy" Denis

April 19, 1927 - January 6, 2022

There passed from this world on Thursday morning, a great benefactor and grand Lady known to many.

In the early morning of January 6th, Vetra "Tommy" Denis passed gently away in her sleep, at her home in Stevinson, CA, at the age of 94. Tommy was born with blonde hair and blue eyes as Vetra Balentine. She was born on April 19, 1927, in Hominy, OK, to her mother Edna Amzilla Lunsford and her father Bert B. Balentine. She moved with her mother and sisters from Oklahoma early in the 1940s, to escape poverty and to find opportunity in a then-thriving California.

Married on May 12, 1946, she was preceded in death by her beloved husband, Frank Benjamin Denis; himself being born on September 16, 1928, in Escalon, CA. Tommy and Frank were life-long residents of Turlock after their marriage and were prominent members of the regional business community, having creating, owned, and operated such businesses as Denis Dodge, Cal Neva Slush Company, Barrel Inn Liquors general stores, and others. They were also active in real estate development throughout California, parts of Nevada, and even Hawaii.

With a deep affection toward horticulture and greenery all her life, Tommy was always very content to work in and around, and to walk among, the many

gardens she created throughout her years. During the construction of the premiere Turlock entertainment center, The Divine Gardens, Tommy was instrumental in the creation and installation of all of the property's landscaping. She was especially proud of the main fountain garden that was the centerpiece and namesake to the establishment.

She traveled to many parts of the world and visited such places as Portugal, Jamaica, Costa Rica, Italy, Spain, Bermuda, Rio De Janeiro, Mexico, and more. At one point, she even spent a short time with her husband living in Hawaii part-time before eventually settling at her country home in Stevinson, where she would spend her remaining days surrounded by family.

Tommy had an active, charismatic, and generous personality, which caused her to lead a vibrant and exciting life of constant activity. At the same time, she had little patience for self-pity and the "can't" mindset. She was an avid reader and would occasionally reflect on her deep interest in school in her early years. She regretted not being able to attend school beyond the 8th grade, which was because times were very difficult after the Great Depression and during the "dust bowl" era of the 1930s. So much more can be stated about this devout Christian and strong-willed great Lady, but words can never be a substitute for fond memories. She will always be deeply missed and lovingly remembered.

Tommy is survived by two of her six sisters, Clara Smith of Fresno, CA, and Gloria Becker of Hughson, CA; by her four children, Bruce Denis, Sherry Wilson (Reagan), Karen Kitchell (Mike), and Frank Denis, Jr. (Wendy); by eight of her nine grandchildren, Brett Bodine, Andrea Bodine-Edwards, Carrie Dompe, Sean Dompe, Melissa Gonsalves, Melinda Toy, Ryan Denis, and Jarrett Killough; and by many great-grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and friends.

A memorial service will be held at 10:30 a.m., on Tuesday, January 25, 2022, at Turlock Funeral Home, 425 N. Soderquist Rd., Turlock.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JAN **25**. 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM (PT)

Turlock Funeral Home
425 North Soderquist Road
Turlock, CA 95381
(209) 632-9111
<https://turlockfuneralhome.com>

Tribute Wall



“ *Vetra "Tommy" Denis*

January 28, 2023 at 09:01 AM



“ *Sherry, Gloria, & family: so sorry to hear about Tommy! Someone just let me know that Tommy had passed, as we didn't know. My Dad wanted to share his condolences with your entire family (it makes him grieve for Bertie all over again). Praying for comfort for all of you during this difficult time. While Tommy led a great life, it's never easy. She was the family matriarch and I'm sure you all will miss her.*

Lynn Johnson-Bull - February 04, 2022 at 12:25 PM



“ *To the Denis family, I am so sorry for your loss. I remember Tommy and Frank used to come into the bank where I worked and we all (the bank tellers) used to fight over who got to wait on them. It was usually me, Leonette or Mary who would win because they would choose one of us! We had great conversations loved them! I loved Tommy's spunky personality! She made me laugh every time. You were all so blessed to have her for so many years. May she rest in peace.*

Kelly Gomes-Hittesdorf

Kelly Hittesdorf - January 20, 2022 at 06:53 PM

JE

I can only say this I can't help us say that I loved her so much I've known her since 1989 what a terrific woman she was white great children she had grandchildren she had and the list of friends go on and on she's going to be very missed I know what it's like to miss someone we love her very much the Pappas family

Jeffrey - January 25, 2022 at 02:36 AM

CB

“*Tommy was a fun, smart independent lady. Her smile and sense of humor is something I will never forget. She was always very active and interesting to talk to. Straight talk is what I liked!*

So sorry to hear about her passing, but she had a good long life. ❤️



Carol Bettincourt-McRoberts - January 14, 2022 at 09:15 AM