

Thelma Bont



Thelma's Life Story

Thelma Bont was a loving wife and mother who cared deeply for her God and her family. She always tried to make her home warm and inviting for her family and friends. Her kind words, refusal to gossip, and tender spirit made her a safe place for others.

Born just before the Roaring Twenties, Thelma entered the world on June 24, 1919. She was the only girl born to William and Ella (Boersma) Goote. Thelma was delivered in the family home at 1427 Alpine Avenue. Later, the family moved to 1009 Widdicomb NW when the children were school age. The move kept them from having to cross Leonard Street to get to school. She and her brothers, Mart, Bill and Don, all attended West Side Christian School and then they all graduated from Christian High School. While the kids were growing up, William worked as a bookkeeper while Ella tended to the home.

After graduating from high school in 1937, Thelma went on to Comptometer School where she learned to be a bookkeeper just like her father. She quickly found work in the office of the Keeler Brass Company.

Sometime after high school, Thelma met Harold Bont at a roller rink. They had seen each other a few times before, but the night he asked to take her home was the beginning of their courtship. Harold was in the service at the time, and he was stationed in Wisconsin. He was head over heels for Thelma and one day he sent her a letter saying "Get everything ready. I'm coming home. Let's get married." On Furlough, Thelma with a borrowed wedding dress, married Harold at the

Alpine Avenue Christian Reformed Church on August 19, 1943. The honeymoon had to wait because Harold had to return to his station to finish out his duty. Once he was discharged, they moved to Kalamazoo for a short time before returning to Grand Rapids to begin their family.

One year later, on September 22, 1944, Harold and Thelma welcomed their first of four sons, John. Bill came along on June 21, 1946, Dick on January 7, 1949 and lastly came Tom, born on April 26, 1951. The boys grew up in the family home at 1428 Tamarack NW until 1960 when they moved down the street to 1514 Tamarack. Harold





always provided well for the family. He was usually in sales, which required him to travel about four days a week. He was employed by Firestone, selling tires, later at Sachner Products and at various other places as well. Thelma's father-in-law taught her how to drive in 1956 and she was thrilled with her first car, a 1948 Studebaker. By the time their youngest was nine, Thelma went back to work. Later, the family moved to 1224

Fuller Avenue and again in 1969 they moved to 831 Webster NW. Thelma worked as a bookkeeper for Jurgens & Holtvluwer Men's Store on Leonard Street NW. She was a dedicated employee and worked there for twenty-one years before retiring in 1981 at the age of 62.

She and Harold attended Alpine Avenue Christian Reformed Church with their four boys every Sunday.

The boys all wore crisp white shirts, all pressed by mom. Their hair was combed by dad who would raise them up to the counter while he found the perfect part. Before each service, the boys were each given four peppermints. Once they arrived they knew they were to sit in the balcony, second row on the left.

The kids attended Westside Christian School and all graduated from Christian High School. During lunch time, while attending the West Side Pine building, they walked home to eat their lunch and read a Bible story with Mom. The family looked forward to their vacations when they would rent a cottage at Hess, Big Star and Silver Lakes

and although Thelma could not swim, she did have to jump in the water once to save Tom. The Bonts also went to Washington DC and New York as a family.



Every Monday was known at the Bont house as wash day. Thelma sprinkled the shirts with water, rolled them in a towel and placed them in the fridge until Tuesday, which was ironing day. Their friends always wanted to come and hang out at the Bont house where Thelma had a spread of delicious snacks to offer. Some of the



tastier foods Thelma was known for was her cookies and bars, pies, cakes, chicken, roasts, potatoes and gravy and banana bread. Every Sunday she would make a wonderful meal for the family and guests. She and Harold loved to entertain and they usually had church friends over for company on Sunday evenings after church. They also for many years had friends over on Saturday nights to play cards.



When the kids were young, Saturday supper was reserved for hamburgers and later popcorn while the family enjoyed the Jackie Gleason show on television together. As the kids got older and started families of their own, they continued to gather at mom and dad's for hamburgers every Saturday for lunch. This was a tradition that carried on even after Harold passed away. Thelma was a wonderful grandmother who loved her grandkids dearly. She knitted afghans for all her loved ones while watching her stories, which were the soaps, and

watching Lawrence Welk. She lost her beloved Harold to cancer in 1990. It was a very painful time and she leaned on her family and church for support.

Thelma Bont was always kind to everyone and in return people looked out for her. She was a beautiful example of a godly wife, loving mother and friend and she will be deeply missed.



Mrs. Thelma B. Bont, aged 87 of Grand Rapids, on Saturday July 8, 2006, went home to be with her Lord and Savior and to be reunited with her husband Harold, who passed away in 1989. She is survived by her 4 boys and daughters-in-law, John and Candy Bont, Bill and Paula Bont, Dick and Beth Bont, Tom and Barbara Bont; 19 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren; her brother and sister in law, Mart and Betty Goote; nieces, nephews and many friends. A service to celebrate the life of Thelma will be held on Monday at 11:00 a.m. at Heritage Life Story Funeral Home - Alt & Shawmut Hills Chapel, 2120 Lake Michigan Dr. NW with her son, Pastor Dick Bont officiating. Burial will be in Rosedale Cemetery. Relatives and friends are invited to meet her family at funeral home on Sunday from 2-4 and 7-9p.m., and again on Monday from 10:00a.m. until the service begins. Contributions in her memory may be made to the Christian Rest Home or West Side Christian School. To read more about Thelma's life, to leave your memories of her or sign her guest book, visit her web page at www.lifestorynet.com.



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