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OMA BRAGG O'BRYAN

In the early 1930s, not many single, 22-year-old women drove from West Virginia to Mexico City and Canada, much less with a single man (even though he did eventually become her husband). However, our mother, Oma Bragg O'Bryan, did just that. After a long life as a mother, wife, teacher, poet and artist, she died Wednesday, June 11, 2003, in Tallahassee.

She was born June 18, 1913, in Hinton.

Two daughters, Sandra (Jack) Newell of Tallahassee and Elizabeth (Jim) Coffin of Munster, Ind., survive her, as well as a grandson, Chester Travis Coffin, a great-granddaughter, Katherine Elizabeth of Naperville, Ill.; and two sisters, Pearl Laska Chamberlain, 94, of Fairbanks, Alaska, and Pauline Roth, 92, of Riverside, Calif. Our father, Voy Travis O'Bryan, preceded her in death.

Our mother was a lifelong learner with a library card from libraries in Florida, Georgia and West Virginia. She started school in 1920 after her father sued the school board to get a one-room school on top of Chestnut Mountain. Mother graduated from Sandstone High School where she walked down the mountain to school and home again while studying birds and fleeing wildcats.

She received a bachelor's degree from Concord College and started her teaching career in the one-room schools of Summers County.

In 1953 our parents moved to Fort White, Fla., where mother, taught second grade. After moving to Lake City, she introduced families to the creative world of art through the Columbia County Adult Education program. Upon retirement, our parents continued their learning as they camped throughout the Southeast. They then settled in Tallahassee. Today, we carry on this legacy of learning with careers in public libraries and public education.

Among Mother's many interests was writing poetry. Here is one poem from her book Sunrise Beyond.

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I Heard the Trees
I heard the trees
the streams
the bees
the birds
blending in one song of the
universe
Not all sang the same tune
Not all sang the same notes
In our orchestra we did not
all play the same instrument
yet it all made a harmonious tune
Creeds are like that
the motive is the same
the motive of all religion is
the same

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A memorial service will be held July 20, in that one-room school on Chestnut Mountain. Additional memories will be shared at O'Bryan Cemetery, where our father is buried, and at the Chestnut Mountain Cemetery, the Bragg Cemetery on the farm where she grew up.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Summers County Public Library, 201, Temple Street, Hinton, WV. 25951.

Bevis Funeral Home, Tallahassee, is in charge of the arrangements.