

## KARR



Joyce Karr  
October  
7, 1924 -  
November  
19, 2012

Joyce Karr,  
a devoted  
wife and  
mother and  
an elegant

lady, died Monday at her home in El Paso, where she had lived for 62 years. She was 88. Joyce was born at home, in Lyon County, Kansas, to Gladys Anne and Euphrates (Frate) Van Gundy. A hard-working farm girl, she rode to a one-room schoolhouse every day with her brother in a wagon drawn by a mean-tempered pony. This was probably the only living creature Joyce ever actively disliked. She was as pretty as she was sweet. In 1943 the Emporia newspaper reported that, "surrounded with lovely girls and smiling cadets forming an honor guard, and to the sound of military trumpets, Joyce Van Gundy, senior from Emporia, was crowned Peggy Pedagog, queen of the November war bond drive at the Coronation Ball." Many a local man admired her, but while still a teenager she fell in love with an upper classman, John Karr, and for more than sixty-three years they were rarely apart. They married on June 10, 1945, one month after the end of World War II and nine days after

John's graduation from West Point. As an army wife, Joyce accompanied John to Oklahoma, Ohio, and Florida before they moved overseas to Linz, Austria, where their first child was born. After they came home John was diagnosed with tuberculosis; she helped nurse him through the disease, remarking that he was not a compliant patient. Because of his health, in 1950 they and their growing family headed southwest in search of a dry, warm climate. Driving into El Paso, they stayed the weekend with Army friends, the Gatlins. John found a job Monday morning, and they fell in love with El Paso. Some years later, she too developed TB. She healed quickly and continued raising her family and pursuing her interests. Though not looking for a house, Joyce and John stumbled into a home in Sunset Heights-or rather, a partially built, long-abandoned shell, with only wall studs and subfloors. Undaunted, they wanted the house. It was so large that when the moving van arrived, their entire belongings-furniture, clothes, kids-filled only the living room. She unpacked the furniture, sent the kids to school, and got busy making the house a lovely home that was filled with laughter, company, music, and love. Joyce was the epitome of grace-although she would have laughed at the very

idea. She was famed for her composure amidst challenges big and small. When her husband learned he had celiac disease, she became a gluten-free chef long before the allergy was a common diagnosis. She maintained her home immaculately, although there was a secret room that revealed her hidden trait of keeping everything, a sense of thrift she learned during farm life and the Great Depression. Always calm and soft-spoken, she once became uncharacteristically irked when her middle son, Chesley, came home late for dinner, which was on the table at 5:30 sharp. Trying to defend his tardiness, he asked her why she spent all her time working so hard for other people. She looked him sternly in the eye and said, "Because that's what I do." Joyce lost John in 2008. She is survived by her children: Michael Karr and wife, Marie-Paule Bondat, of Boston; Stephanie Karr and husband, Mark Watts, of El Paso; Chesley Karr and wife, Kari, of Albuquerque; John Sedgwick Karr and partner, Patrick Bear, of San Francisco; and adopted daughter Zella Riley of Kansas City. She was cherished by her grandchildren: Andrew Karr of Tampa; Abigail Karr of New York; Zach Dodson of Chicago; Seth Dodson and husband, Viktor van Bramer, of Chicago; and Aaron Karr of Albuquerque. She is also

survived by her brother, Myron Van Gundy, and his wife, Linda, of Emporia. Not surprisingly, she had a wide circle of wonderful friends, ranging from teenagers to nonagenarians and from professors to handymen. Chuy Garcia has been faithfully by her side for many years, gardening and tending the house. She loved spending time with her beloved PEO sisters. Her lifelong family friend, Jake Gatlin, was a source of comfort and enjoyment. Lilia Pinho was a caring and patient caretaker and the family is most grateful to her. Memorial gifts can be made to the Karr Family Fund at the Visiting Nurses Association, 4171 N. Mesa (Mim was a lifetime honorary member of the VNA Board of Directors) or the Center Against Family Violence, 580 Giles. A celebration of her life will be held at a future date. Arrangements by Harding-Orr-McDaniel, 320 Mesa Street. Mim, we love you. Thank you for teaching us to love and live a full life. We will think of you every day, and will try to keep our rooms clean.

