



Blanche MacDonald Francis

October 12, 2015

Blanche M. Francis was born on Pear Street in New Orleans, Louisiana on October 31, 1926, the third of four children, to Elizabeth and Guillermo Macdonald, Jr. The youngest girl, Blanche was raised in a family where the women were taught to be disciplined, strong, and independent. Blanche learned quickly to establish her own identity and developed into a woman of character who embodied the values of honesty, compassion, loyalty and faith. A young Blanche grew up in the Hollygrove section of New Orleans where each sibling was tasked with a different chore. Blanche was the "cook," a prophetic title that she would more than live up to throughout her lifetime. In the Macdonald household, there was a time for play and a time for work with education always remaining a top priority. Blanche attended Xavier Preparatory School and later graduated from Xavier University of Louisiana in 1948 with a degree in physical education. She attended the University of Indiana for post graduate study. Xavier was then run by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament (SBS) founded by Philadelphia philanthropist Katharine Drexel. The same year that Blanche graduated, a young man from Lafayette, Louisiana entered Xavier University as a freshman mathematics major. However, their paths wouldn't cross for four more years. It was while working as a modern dance instructor at Xavier University that Blanche first met Norman C. Francis, a 1952 Xavier graduate who was living on Xavier's campus while he studied law at Loyola University. Their destinies were inextricably linked by a strong belief in education and family. Blanche and

Norman married at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church in 1955 and forged a partnership that would produce six children - four boys and two girls - and a legacy that has spanned more than 60 years. At the beginning of their union, Blanche and Norman lived on Xavier's campus, a home which their expanding family soon outgrew. They later moved to King Drive, and their 7th Ward home was a welcoming haven for family and friends for over 30 years until it was submerged in the devastating flood waters of Hurricane Katrina. As her husband's trusted companion and as Xavier's First Lady, Mrs. Francis is credited with "becoming the take-charge mom who made it easy for her husband to be the take-charge president." Known for her down-to-earth and unpretentious personality, Blanche could light up any room, especially when wearing her signature color red. In the company of some of the world's most celebrated people, including the last eight U.S. presidents and many foreign dignitaries, Blanche exuded quick wit and a distinctive Southern charm that would become her hallmark. A lifelong resident of New Orleans, Blanche volunteered her time and talent with numerous charitable organizations throughout her beloved city. Mrs. Francis sat on the boards of the YMCA, Second Harvest Food Bank, Hope Haven and Covenant House. She was a former president of the New Orleans Adolescent Hospital board, a former secretary of the Louisiana State Museum board and a former member of the boards of WYES television, Xavier Prep, Notre Dame Seminary and St. Joseph Seminary. She received numerous community service awards, including an honorary doctorate from Our Lady of Holy Cross College. With her husband at her side, Mrs. Francis traveled around the globe, including an once-in-a-lifetime trip to Rome in 2000 for the canonization of Saint Katharine Drexel whom she knew as a child. Preceded in death by her sister Consuelo McDaniel and brother William B. Macdonald, III, Blanche is survived by her husband Norman; sister Clarita Reed; children Michael (Ulrika), Timothy (Ashley), David, Kathleen, Patrick and Christina; sisters-in-law Mabel Bailey and 11 grandchildren: Christian, Aili, Gabriel, Olivia, Sara, Jasmine, Devin, Miles, Joseph, Jolie and Gabrielle; and a host of nieces, nephews, and

friends.

A visitation and rosary will be held at Xavier University Convocation Center, 7900 Stroelitz Street on Thursday, October 15, 2015 from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm. A Funeral Mass of Christian Burial will be held at St. Louis Cathedral, 615 Pere Antoine Alley on Friday, October 16, 2015 at 10:00 am. Viewing will begin at 8:30 am. Principle Celebrant, Most Reverend Gregory M. Aymond, Archbishop of New Orleans, Concelebrant, Most Reverend Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D., Auxillary Bishop of Galveston-Houston and Most Reverend Fernand J. Cherie, III., OFM, V.G., Auxillary Bishop of New Orleans. Interment will be private. In lieu of flowers, please make contributions to the Norman and Blanche Francis Scholarship Fund at Xavier University, 1 Katharine Drexel Drive, New Orleans, Louisiana 70125. Arrangements by Duplain W. Rhodes Funeral Home, 3933 Washington Avenue. Please visit www.rhodesfuneral.com to sign the online guestbook

Cemetery Details

St. Louis #3 Cemetery

3421 Esplanade Ave
New Orleans, LA 70119

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT **15**. 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Xavier University Convocation Hall
1Drexel Drive
New Orleans, LA 70125

Visitation

OCT **16**. 8:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

St. Louis Cathedral
New Orleans, LA 70116

Service

OCT **16**. 10:00 AM (CT)

St. Louis Cathedral
New Orleans, LA 70116

Tribute Wall

LH

“ Dear Kathy,

We are deeply saddened by the news of your mother's passing. Our heart felt condolences to you and your family during this difficult time. Should you need anything at all, please do not hesitate to reach out.

With Love,

Lisa, Stephanie, Abby, Dan & the rest of The LeadDog Family

Lisa Heinowitz - October 29, 2015 at 09:24 AM

LT

“ Dear Dr. Francis and Family,

Our heartfelt sympathy is extended to you. We send loving thoughts and are prays for each of your during this difficult time. The legacy of your beloved wife and mother will be cherished and continue at Xavier into future. You are in our hearts. We, members of your extended Xavier Family stand with you to support you always.

With love,

*The Family of Sterling Cincore, Sr.
Class of 47*

Lydia Templeton - October 22, 2015 at 02:14 PM

AN

“ Truly the wind beneath the wings of the Francis family. A beautiful woman who lived a beautiful life. Miss Blanche was an exemplary mother and wife. My thoughts and prayers are with the Francis family. Blessings to you all.

Love,
~Arthel Neville

Arthel Neville - October 19, 2015 at 12:30 PM

LA

“ Louella B. Alexander sent a virtual gift in memory of Blanche MacDonald Francis



Louella B. Alexander - October 18, 2015 at 10:58 AM

VE

“ Rest in peace our First Lady of XAVIER! My love and prayers to Dr. Francis and the family! What a beautiful family!

Venola L. Johnson, Esq. - October 17, 2015 at 09:00 PM