

Doris Thompson Memorial Scholarship

In order to apply for the *Doris Thompson Memorial Scholarship* you must answer yes to the following questions:

1. Are you a senior at Study High School?
2. Are you a mother?
3. Have you exhibited a strong work ethic and desire to create a life for you and your family?

If you answered no to any of these questions you are not eligible for this scholarship. If you answered yes to each question you may proceed to the application.

About this scholarship:

Doris Thompson was my mom. At the time of her death in 2001, I had to marvel at her life and the profound impact she had on her children and extended family. Because you are receiving this award, I want you to know something about this remarkable woman.

Mom was married and pregnant at 16. Unfortunately, she miscarried at seven months on a hot August day while working in a poultry building on the farm land she and my father first rented. Although she lived in poverty, she was never one to let her personal circumstances overwhelm her. So, she returned to high school following her miscarriage and completed her senior year, graduating in 1949. During that year, she received a school award for an English essay she wrote describing the life she hoped to live as a good wife and mother.

I was born in 1950, my sister Barbara in 1952, and later our brother Brian in 1963. By the time I started first grade in 1956, my parents were able to borrow money to buy an 85-acre farm, and we were able to leave the five acres we had been renting with its two-room cabin and outhouse. My parents received the necessary loan from the bank because of their strong work record.

All of us worked the land by ranging turkey breeder hens, housing chicken layer hens, harvesting crops, and raising cattle. I can remember one summer when my sister and I gathered over a 1,000 chicken eggs in one week. It was hot, backbreaking work but Mom persevered. She never, ever gave up on anything. As time went on, my parents continued to prosper and acquire more acreage. Because of their 24/7 work life, they were eventually able to purchase a 500-acre farm. Sadly, before the 1970s would be over, my father would leave my mother. It broke her heart, but she persisted. She didn't stay down and drove herself forward.

During the divorce settlement the farm was sold. Mother lived in Jefferson City and obtained licenses for real estate work and cosmetology. She was always able to set goals. She was co-owner of Looking Good Beauty Salon for several years. However, she greatly missed farm life and repurchased the farm she had given up during the divorce settlement. It was a tremendous risk for her as she had to finance most of the purchase. We all held our breath as we watched this woman in her 50s return to the hard work and life she loved. She contracted with Honeysuckle White Turkeys to manage "grow-out" flocks, taking freshly hatched birds and raising them until 16 weeks of age at which time they would be "shipped out." Mother prepared the buildings and washed and sterilized the waters and feeders for each shipment of 16,000 babies. After eight weeks of age, they would be moved to a "grow-out"

building which she also prepared. Thus, it was not unusual for her to have 32,000 turkeys at a time. I still remember her jumping barb-wire fences and in and out of truck beds.

Throughout her life, Mom worked hard while also managing to make all of the school clothes for her daughters—dresses with lace, formals and wool skirts. Mother gardened and canned vegetables, cooked wonderful meals and great desserts. She remodeled the farm houses she lived in, patching plaster and refinishing furniture. She loved light rock and country and western music as well as singing in church musicals.

At the time of her death at the age of 69, she had been retired three years and was living in town. I love this woman and I want her to be an inspiration to you. She was not a saint or a miracle worker. She was only one woman – a woman who cared deeply for her children and the lives she hoped they would live. She is, though, a model of what hard work, love of family, and dedication can accomplish.

Congratulations and work hard!

Dr. Bev Rohlf