

# LIFE

*Stories*

**Ruth Atkinson**  
"NEVER A DULL MOMENT"

**BORN**

**AUGUST 15, 1927**

# ALWAYS ACTIVE AND AGING GRACEFULLY AS SHE ADDS LIFE TO HER YEARS...

## The Early Years - A Tomboy in the Beginning

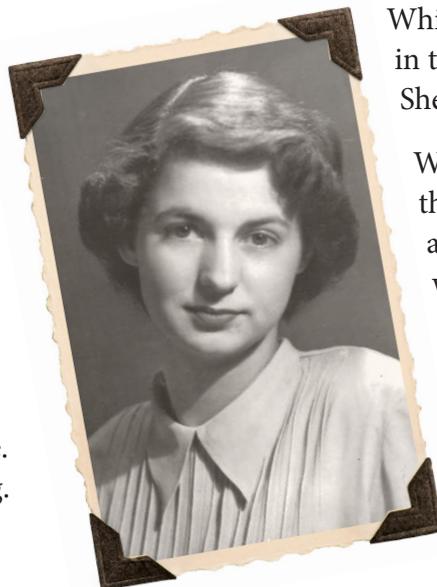
Born Ruth Aurelia Martin in 1927 in Little Rock, Arkansas, she was the second child, of two, to Ruth and Roger Martin. Her earliest memories of growing up are recollections of a childhood filled with imagination, pets and playing outdoors. Ruth enjoyed making her own fun, like riding her bicycle (named Silver) while standing upright on the seat, dressing up favorite pets, and playing cowgirl (complete with costume and accessories). She was especially fond of western movies. Her favorite stars were Hopalong Cassidy and Tom Mix, Hollywood's first western star. One could say that Ruth's childhood prepared her well for what lay ahead.



Playing cowgirl, with bicycle she named Silver (Lone Ranger's Horse), strolling her dog named Tammy and reading a book

## El Dorado and College Life - The Formative Years

Ruth and big sister, Beth Dean, grew up attending public schools in El Dorado, Arkansas, an oil "boom town" that had evolved into a prosperous city. While in eighth grade, Ruth met a new classmate named Gordon Atkinson, who was immediately impressed with how well she withstood, and countered, his pranks. It was the beginning of something meant to be. By high school they would be dating.



High school for Ruth was a time of achievement. She was elected maid of homecoming her freshman year, joined Thespians her junior year, and was elected to the National Honor Society her senior year. She and Gordon were on the cheerleader squad together. Upon graduation in 1945, WWII was still going on. Gordon enlisted and Ruth found herself attending Brenau Women's College in Georgia. After her parents moved to Port Arthur, Texas, she would transfer to The University of Texas at Austin and graduate. Despite great distances, the Navy, and college, Gordon managed to visit Ruth at each campus, and even places in between, including Port Arthur.



Gordon visiting Ruth at Brenau Women's College, Ruth and friends at Tri-Delta House, Spring 1949 and front yard of parents home in Port Arthur while home from college

They married in Port Arthur and began their future together back in Little Rock, Arkansas, where

Gordon would start medical school.

While he attended school, Ruth worked in the school's pathology department. She was 22 years old.

Within 3 years, they would welcome their first child into the world and set a new course for St. Louis, Missouri, where Gordon would complete his residency in surgery at Barnes Hospital.

Before they left St. Louis, three more children would arrive. Life was extremely busy for Ruth,



1958, one year after moving to Dothan from St. Louis-Allen, Martin, Clayton, Ruth and Lauren

and it kept bringing changes. Gordon accepted an offer to start his medical practice in a small town in southeast Alabama called Dothan.

### The Dothan Years - "Never a Dull Moment"

Moving from a big city to Dothan, Alabama was huge for a young family of six. Dothan was a small town with a new hospital where Gordon would start his career. Ruth was already familiar with the medical profession. It was always demanding. Gordon would work all hours to build his practice and Ruth would find herself doing the same with the four children. Two more children would arrive later. She and Gordon would manage to build a house just large enough for eight. As Ruth still says today, "there was never a dull moment" and hardly any privacy for the next thirty years plus.

Six children were raised through their phases and stages of life in this house. There were plenty of challenges, celebrations, crises, and even time for vacations. The house was worn out by the time Gordon retired his practice as they planned a new chapter at Santa Rosa Beach, Florida.



Family of eight at Panama City Beach, FL in 1965 and Atkinson Family with Westie Paisley Easter 1968

### Grandmother and Life at the Beach

Ruth and Gordon's life together had come full circle by the time they began planning a new house in Florida. They had visited the beaches in the Florida panhandle as a young couple before children. The beach became a family vacation tradition each summer while living in Dothan. Now it was their turn. Having nurtured six children into adulthood, the grandparent years had already begun and they wanted a new place to gather. The new house was built in time for the enjoyment of a new generation. There were plenty more celebrations and gatherings before Gordon passed away after 53 years of marriage.



Gordon and Ruth enjoying retirement at the beach, 1996

Today, Ruth still spends her days being as active as possible, just like her childhood. She enjoys having her dog, Murray, at her side, walking outdoors, and leading the exercise classes at Camellia Place. One might say she has managed to keep her youth while aging gracefully. She is 90 years old this year and still adding life to her years.

Ruth and Winston with Grandchildren (Stuart, Jr. and Kate), great grandchildren (Layne and Caleb), and Rebel Atkinson, Christmas in Birmingham, AL



# Quick Facts about Ruth Atkinson

- Born August 15, 1927 in Little Rock, Arkansas
- Graduate of El Dorado High School, 1945; National Honor Society, Thespians, Cheerleader 1944-45
- Attended Brenau Women's College, now Brenau University, in Gainesville, Georgia
- Graduated with Bachelor of Arts from The University of Texas at Austin, 1949; Foreign language major, and Tri Delta sorority member
- Married in Port Arthur, Texas, where her parents lived for 18 years while her father was the Pharmacist-owner of a soda fountain pharmacy, and where her love of ice cream was born
- Worked in the Pathology Department at the University of Arkansas Medical School, Little Rock, Arkansas
- Bible Teacher to the Adult Women's Sunday School Class for over 8 years, First Baptist Church, Dothan, Alabama
- President of the Women's Auxiliary to the Houston County Medical Society, Dothan, Alabama
- Member of the Women's Tennis League at the Dothan Country Club at age 45, where she excelled in matches against her younger colleagues and friends
- Mother, caretaker, and counselor for six children and wife of 53 years to her husband, Gordon
- Grandmother, caretaker, and counselor to seven grandchildren; great-grandmother to nine
- At age 90, "Miss Ruth" is the informal leader of exercise classes at Camellia Place and enjoys music, dancing, and visiting friends with Murray, her loyal companion.



Ruth and Murray, August 2017



May 2013 family gathering with Ruth and six children, from L to R: Todd, Martin, Clayton, Lauren, Allen, and Stuart



Ruth with the Easter Bunny, April 2016



Ruth enjoying her day at Camellia Place, July 2017