



## VIRGINIA LEE SMITH

June 30, 1923 - July 18, 2011

Virginia Lee Smith (nee Braswell) went home to God on July 18, 2011. She was born on June 30, 1923, in Wylam, Alabama to John Ola Braswell, employed at U.S. Steel, and Virginia Stone Braswell. She attended school and grew up in the Wylam community, At the age of 16, she defied her parents and married Lynn Edgar (Buck) Smith, a 20-year-old steelworker who had also grown up in Wylam, roller-skating to her marriage at a justice of the peace when her father refused to drive her. The young marrieds loved to dance, winning several dance and jitterbug contests in the Birmingham area. When her husband entered the Army Air Corps in WWII, she left Alabama for the first time and followed him to various military posts during his training, returning home only after he shipped out for active duty in the Indo-China theatre as a Hump pilot. Active duty continued into the newly formed Air Force and service in the same theatre during the Korean War, and afterward they moved to various military posts throughout the United States. After seven sons died from miscarriage and/or premature birth, the Smiths decided to leave the military so they could adopt. A daughter, Susan Lynn, was added to the family in 1954. A new home and a promising business were lost two years later, when they were involved in a wreck with a freight train. Mrs. Smith was left with shattered legs, feet, and ankles. When told she would never walk again, she refused to accept that diagnosis, and underwent several groundbreaking orthopedic surgeries that were later written up in professional medical journals. On crutches for several years, she continued to force herself

toward mobility, and was finally able to walk without assistance. A move to a small house in Midfield followed, and the family joined Midfield Baptist Church, where she became a member of the choir and a Sunday School teacher, and her husband became a deacon. She finished her education and took additional accounting classes, and found work as a bookkeeper, then an accountant, then an office manager, while her husband became an insurance salesman for State Farm. A larger house in Fairfield Highlands followed when their daughter reached high-school age. Life changed again four years later when her husband had to retire with heart disease and they had to sell their home and move into an apartment. She still managed to follow a challenging career path and put their daughter through college, working until her husband developed lung cancer. After his death and that of her father, she moved to Hueytown to take care of her mother, who had suffered the first of several strokes. After her mother's death, Mrs. Smith developed vascular dementia and other health problems, and was cared for by her daughter for the next 12 years, until her death. She was also preceded in death by her brother, John O. Braswell, Jr., and her numerous brothers and sisters in law. She leaves behind her daughter, Susan S. Fliegel (Stewart), and several nieces and nephews, including John Richard Braswell, Betty Jo Braswell, Gloria Hart Dutton (Clyde), and Lynn Hart Threadgill, and a few surviving close friends, We will miss her strength, her courage, her faith in God, and her sense of humor, as well as her love for her family and her pets, but know that she will be waiting for us on the other side, when our time comes. A graveside service will be held Wednesday, 7-19-2011, at 10:00 AM, at Highland Memorial Gardens. Peoples Chapel Funeral Home directing.