



**McHENRY
MUSEUM**
& Historical Society

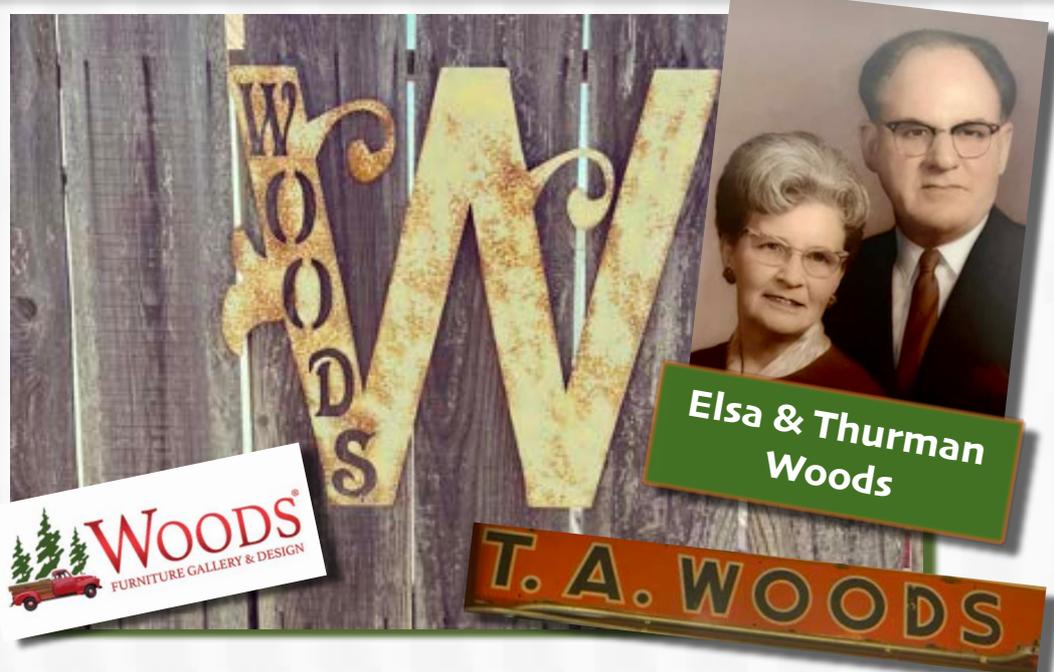
History Lesson

Newsletter

June 2022

“A chair is still a chair, even when there’s no one sitting there, but a chair is not a house and a house is not a home when there’s no one there to hold you tight, and no one there you can kiss good night.” These lyrics from Burt Bacharach ring true. A piece of furniture does not make a home, it’s the people in the house which makes it a home. For the people of Stanislaus County, their homes are hopefully full of people and love, but may contain a piece of furniture from one loving family, who for over seventy years have been supplying them with furniture, the Woods Family of Turlock.

This is a special edition of the McHenry Museum & Historical Society Newsletter, as we sat down with not one member of a family to tell the story of a historic business, but multiple members to not only share the history of their store, but the strong bond of a family who kept it running. Thurman (1910-2005) and Elsa (1909-1997) Woods opened a furniture and appliance store in Downtown Turlock in the early 1950s. Their children to their grandchildren, and now great-grandchildren keep their legacy alive.



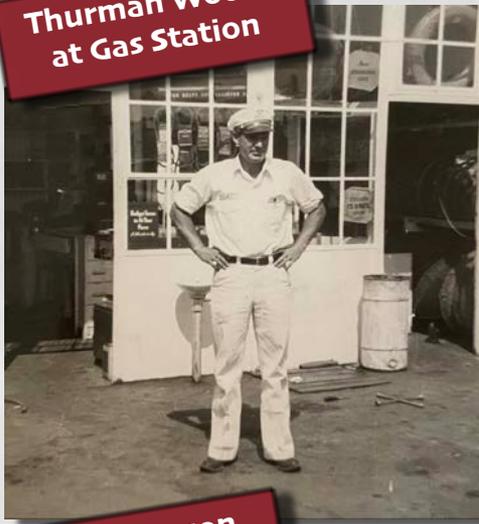
**Elsa & Thurman
Woods**

Thurman and Elsa Woods had three children Darryl, Carrolyn, and Sally. Darryl’s widow Gloria, and her three sons David, Gary, and Randy, as well as Carrolyn Woods Nicholas, and Sally Woods Ocken, all assisted in telling the story of Woods Furniture, and the Woods Family. Thurman Woods’ story begins in Grants Pass Oregon on November 1, 1910. He was the only son of Grover Woods (1886-1933) and Myrtle Crawford Woods (1889-1959). In Carrolyn Woods Nicholas’ words, “the family was nomadic.” Grover Woods never recovered from the 1918 Flu Pandemic and would ultimately pass pre-maturely. The Woods family found themselves in Tempe, Arizona, San Dimas, California, and settled in Atwater, California. Thurman’s Grandmother purchased a small store, where the family ended up living on Lander Avenue in Turlock. Thurman graduated Turlock High School, attended Modesto Junior College, and eventually earned a degree from the University of California, Berkeley. He returned to Turlock and ran a Union 76 Oil Gas Station. He later ran a used car lot, and a Packard Agency. All the while, he was buying property in Turlock. Thurman decided to build a building on a lot he owned at 433 East Main Street and Palm Street. This 3,000 square-foot store was built with no idea what to do with it.

**Please call us at:
(209) 618-5387**

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Thurman Woods
at Gas Station



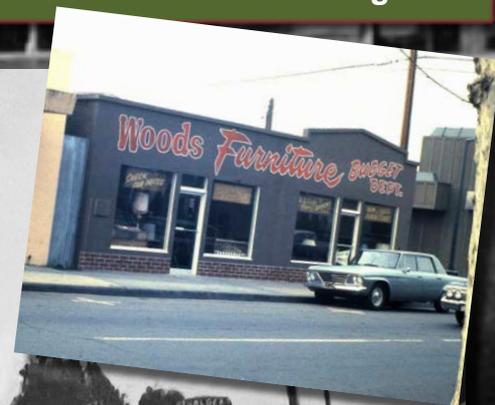
Anna Sorenson
TID Secretary



A local businessman named Harold Ringgenberg (1920-1998) offered to rent it to expand his store Ringgenberg Home Furnishings and move from his location on Lander Avenue. When Ringgenberg decided not to move to Thurman Woods' building, Thurman decided he should run his own furniture and appliance store, and Woods Furniture began officially in Turlock in 1950. Appliances were eliminated within a year. He knew nothing about furniture or how to decorate a room but realized this was a business Turlock needed. He was not a man with a vision, simply a doer, but even doers need others to guide them in their success. The Woods family all agree on one thing, he could not have been able to bring this business to fruition without the love and support of his wife, Elsa.

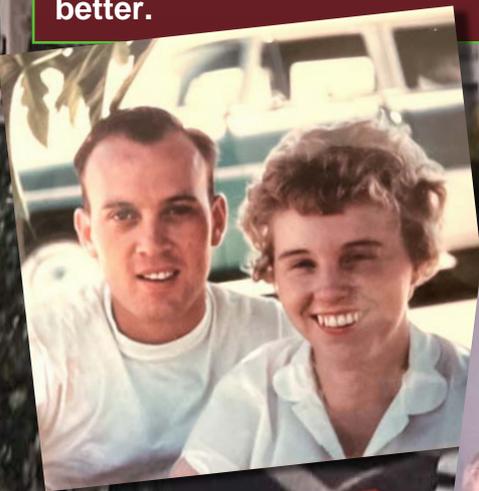
Elsa Woods was a California native. Her parents and grandparents occupied the Central Valley long before the Woods family entered the state. Elsa Oliver was born in Merced, California on October 1, 1909. Her Grandfather Martin Sorenson (1853-1902) was the first secretary for the Turlock Irrigation District. When Martin passed, his wife Anna (1859-1937) took over for her husband and became the first female secretary for the organization. Elsa came of age in Ceres, California. In 1934, Thurman operated a gas station in Merced. Elsa's father ran a nearby plumbing shop. Thurman saw Elsa on the street one day and, as their daughter Carolyn states, "end of story," six months later they were married in Reno, Nevada on February 11, 1935. Elsa was Thurman's linchpin, his everything. She worked at the store with him and raised the children. Together they had three children, Darryl in 1936, Carolyn in 1938, and Sally in 1949. Elsa was a stay-at-home mother but would often help her husband during his lunch break. Otherwise, her number one task was sewing, Elsa was trained in sewing at Modesto Junior College, and spent countless years making clothes for her family. Thurman did not stop at the original Woods' building. He built the Foster Freeze in front of the Furniture Store. Both Woods' girls worked there over the years. The store was extended when Thurman purchased the dry-cleaning shop to the rear of the building.

Elsa Oliver Woods



Darryl Woods graduated University of California, Berkeley with a degree in history in 1958. It was at a dental appointment upon returning to Turlock where a new generation for this furniture store family began. At one visit to Dr. Gordon Bonander (1923-2017) in Turlock, Darryl met dental assistant Gloria Gimle, a Hilmar Native and niece of long-time Turlock Mayor Enoch Christoffersen (1903-1990). Enamored by the perky blonde, Darryl returned home and told his mother Elsa, who called Dr. Bonander's wife Mary Lou (1930-2018) to ask if Gloria was single. She was! Darryl returned to the dental office and informed Gloria he had been away and did not know what to do for fun in Turlock. She suggested to him the movie theater and the bowling alley are fun. He invited her bowling and she accepted. Gloria beat him in their first game. They became engaged a few months later and married on December 26, 1959. Together they had three sons: David "Dave" in 1962, Gary in 1964, and Randall "Randy" in 1967. The Woods family has always valued their employees and did their best to create a family of workers. Darryl joined his father in the family business primarily due to embracing the idea of meeting people and helping customers create their perfect home.

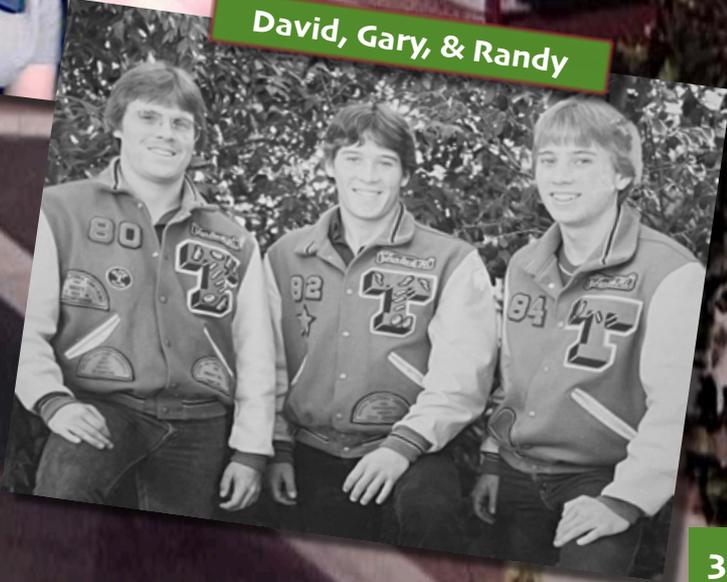
Where Thurman could be direct and matter of fact, he spoke the truth, always. He could literally place random furniture in the showroom and sell it. Darryl was more like his mother, and much calmer. When Thurman, Elsa, Gloria, and Darryl attended furniture shows, Darryl became interested in the design of a furniture gallery, especially those by Flexsteel Brand. Less furniture and more of a focus on how a room could look doubled Woods' business. As sales expanded, there was more work to do as the Woods boys grew up. They were frequently called by their father and grandfather to contribute to the store. The Woods boys were all athletes, and Gary Woods remembers how the phone would ring every Saturday morning with store tasks from Darryl. Even if it meant washing windows or unloading rail spurs, the entire family contributed. Thurman pushed his family to always do better.



Darryl & Gloria
&
Sons



David, Gary, & Randy



Thurman knew he had a family well-abled to take the reins of the organization and retired in 1981. Under Darryl's leadership Woods Furniture opened a second location at Five East Main Street in 1990, which had a long history in Turlock as a hardware store. At the time, the store was owned by the Mensinger Family of American Lumber in Modesto. They also expanded to a warehouse on Linwood Avenue that same decade. The 1990s saw great expansion for the company as well as the biggest loss.

Though paralyzed on her left side due to a stroke in 1981, Elsa Woods remained independent and determined. On November 1, 1997, Thurman's eighty-seventh birthday, Elsa ventured on her Lark Scooter to the market to get supplies to make a pie for her husband. On returning home she was struck by a vehicle. She died eleven days later, on November 12, 1997. She was eighty-eight years old. Elsa Woods was the glue of her family. If Thurman was rough, Elsa came along to smooth any situation. Her death brought devastation, but new life as well. Six weeks later, Gary Woods had a daughter he named Elsa. Thurman Woods always believed in education. Daughter Carolyn excelled as an English Teacher at Grace Davis High School in Modesto. She then ran special education for Modesto City Schools. She then moved to a position Assistant Principal at Wakefield Elementary in Turlock and was later Superintendent of Hughson Elementary School District. Gary Woods received his bachelor's degree from the University of California, Davis, his master's from California State University, Stanislaus, and was looking for ways to complete his Doctorate in Education from the University of the Pacific. Following Elsa Woods' death, Thurman presented Gary with the funds to seek his doctorate. Then in his nineties, Thurman was there to watch his grandson receive the highest degree in his family. Gary went on to retire as Superintendent of Schools for the Beverly Hills Unified School District, in Beverly Hills, California, thus adding a 90210 to a 95380 family.



Thurman & Elsa



Darryl & Gloria

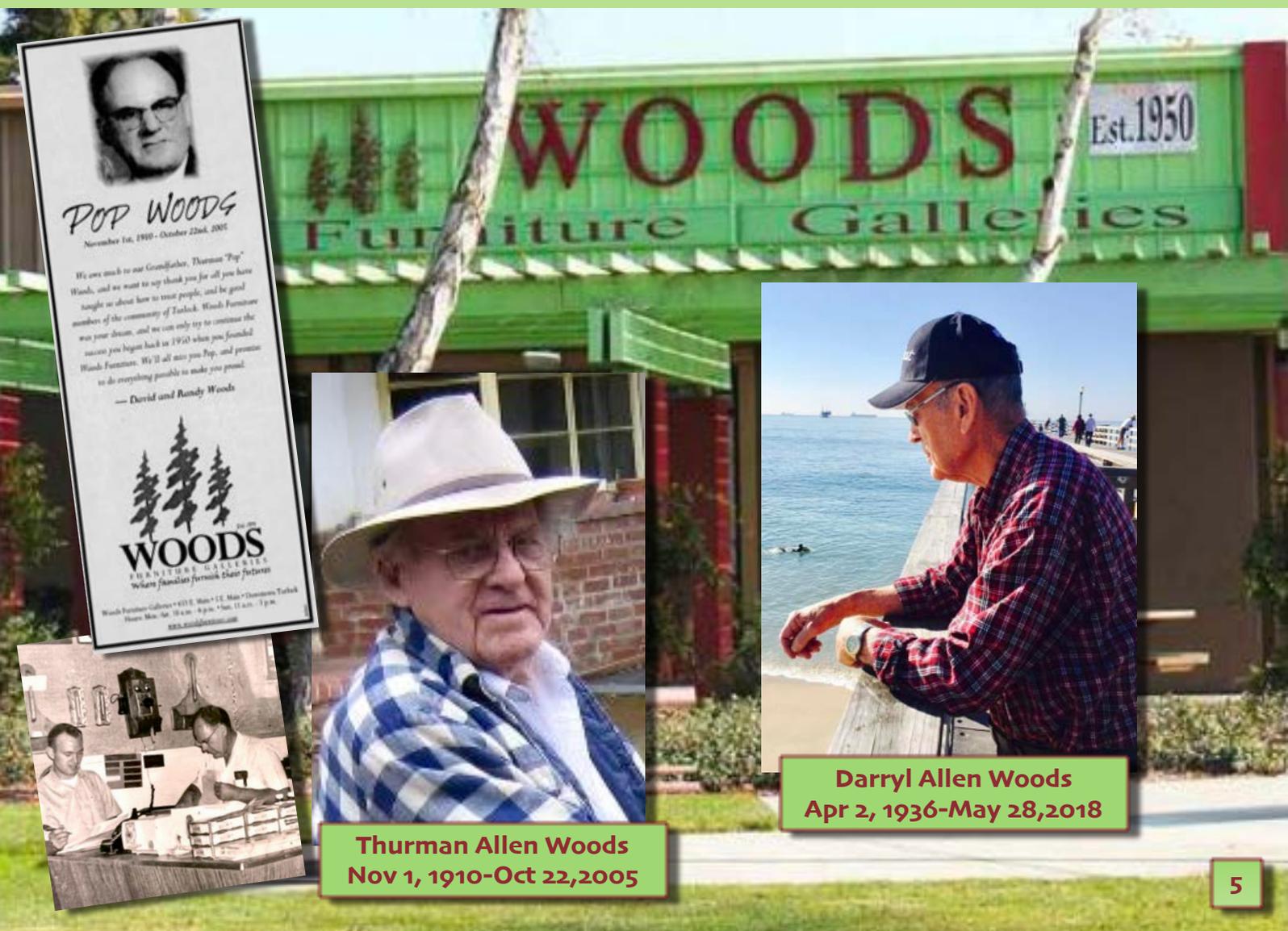


Elsa Oliver Woods
Oct 1, 1909-Nov 12, 1997



Though always interested in the store and his family, Thurman Woods spent the remainder of his life in the home he shared with his beloved Elsa. He passed away at age ninety-five on October 22, 2005. Darryl, and sons Dave and Randy, continued to run the store. Gloria could be seen in one of the showrooms on a regular basis. When Darryl began to consider retirement, He once again passed the reigns to the next generation. He encouraged his sons to open a new location by Highway 99. Dave and Randy listened, and they purchased a location at the Taylor Road Exit in the mid-2000s. The plan was to phase out the Main Street locations one at a time. When the recession hit, it was Darryl who told his sons to sell the two downtown stores and focus on their freeway location. They listened. Woods Furniture would be at that location when Darryl Woods passed away after a long illness on May 28, 2018.

The Global Pandemic brought an end to the Freeway location, and Dave Woods officially retired in 2020. Randy looked toward a new incarnation for the store. In 2021, Woods Furniture re-opened at 225 Lander Avenue in Turlock. Though one could write a story on furniture and brands, this is really the story of a family, a family who continues five generations deep. Dave and wife, Elizabeth, have four children, daughters Drew and Darcy, and sons Derek and Davis, and seven grandchildren, with their eighth due in late August 2022. Gary and wife, Blanca, have daughters Elsa and Doris, and sons Darryl "Seve" and Ole. Randy and wife, Shara, have daughter Annistyn and son Ridge. Carolyn Woods Nicholas, and her husband Jim, and Sally Woods Ocken and her husband Bruce, have left Turlock for the state of Nevada. Carolyn is blessed with two stepchildren, Shelli and Kirk Nicholas, six grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Sally and Bruce have two daughters Andi and Jeni and two grandchildren. The family was raised close and connected, thanks to the lessons of Thurman and Elsa. They were taught the value of money through hard work and determination. They valued their employees and went above and beyond to accommodate their customers. The Woods Family have been involved in more business, civic, and charitable endeavors than one article can list. For a family who started as nomads looking for one place to settle, they sure have made a home in Stanislaus County. Woods Furniture and the Woods Family have assisted countless other families in making their houses homes. As Gary Woods told us, The Woods family are simply people who worked longer and harder than anyone and passed it on.



POP WOODS
November 1st, 1910 - October 22nd, 2005

We owe much to our Grandfather, Thurman "Pop" Woods, and we want to say thank you for all you have taught us about how to treat people, and be good members of the community of Turlock. Woods Furniture was your dream, and we can only try to continue the success you began back in 1950 when you founded Woods Furniture. We'll all miss you Pop, and promise to do everything possible to make you proud.

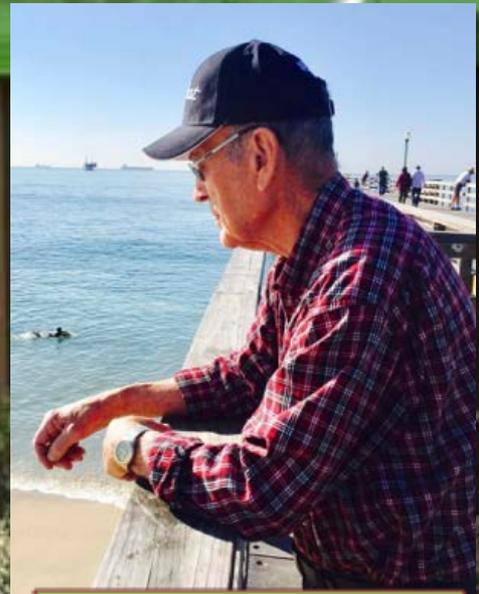
— David and Randy Woods

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Thurman Allen Woods
Nov 1, 1910-Oct 22, 2005



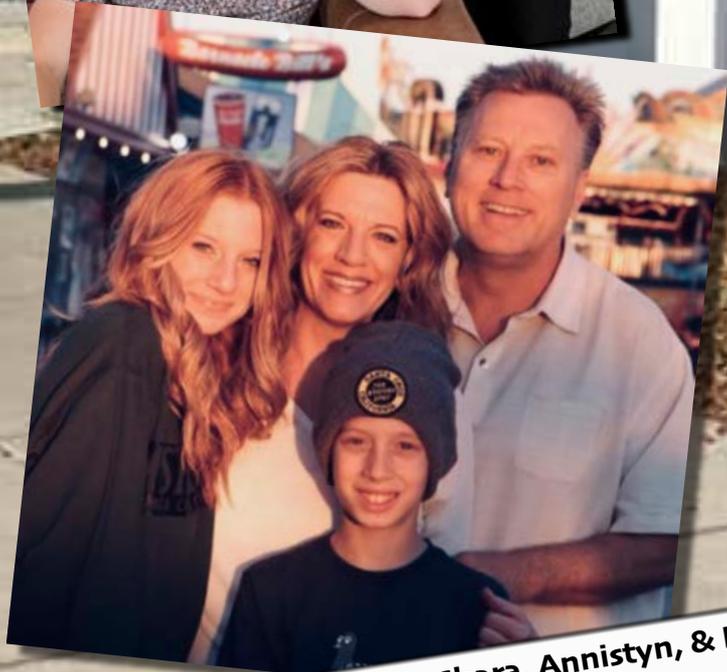
Darryl Allen Woods
Apr 2, 1936-May 28, 2018



The Woods Family is very grateful to all those whom they have employed over the years. Currently, their staff is much smaller, but still as indispensable. Bryce Souza has not worked for the store very long, but still shows a great dedication to his work, he even arranged the initial interview for this story on the Woods Family. However, if there is one employee who has been a staple at Woods Furniture, it would be Alette Lanchester. For the past 30 years, Alette is known throughout Turlock as "The Woods Lady." Alette has a degree in interior design. Her family and the Woods family have known each other for most of Alette's life. Sally Woods Ocken and Alette grew up together. Alette's family has lived next door to the Woods for sixty plus years. In the early nineties, Alette had a storefront with four employees. Darryl Woods needed an interior designer to assist his customers, and he approached Alette. She started on a part time basis, two days a week, and eventually became a full-time employee. She was dismissed during the pandemic but returned at Randy's request and remains three days a week in the store. Alette has a very loyal clientele. The store would not be the same without her.



Bryce Souza & Alette Lanchester



Randy, Shara, Annistyn, & Ridge Woods



Nathan Dabulewicz, helped start the new Lander Ave Location and oversees it.

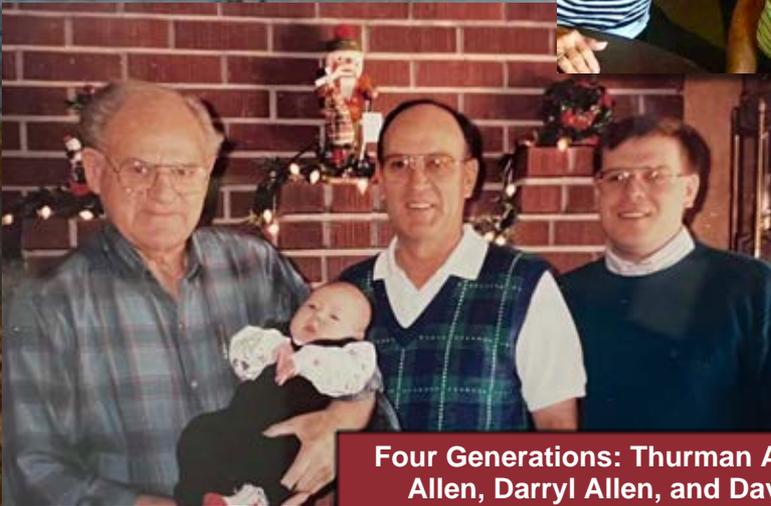
Woods' Family Album



Elsa Woods' 70th Birthday, 1979 Front left to right: Shelli Nicholas, Carolyn Nicholas, Thurman, Elsa, Sally Ocken, Jeni Ocken, and Andi Ocken. Back left to right: Kirk Nicholas, Jim Nicholas, Gary Woods, Gloria Woods, Darryl Woods, Randy Woods, Dave Woods, Bruce Ocken.

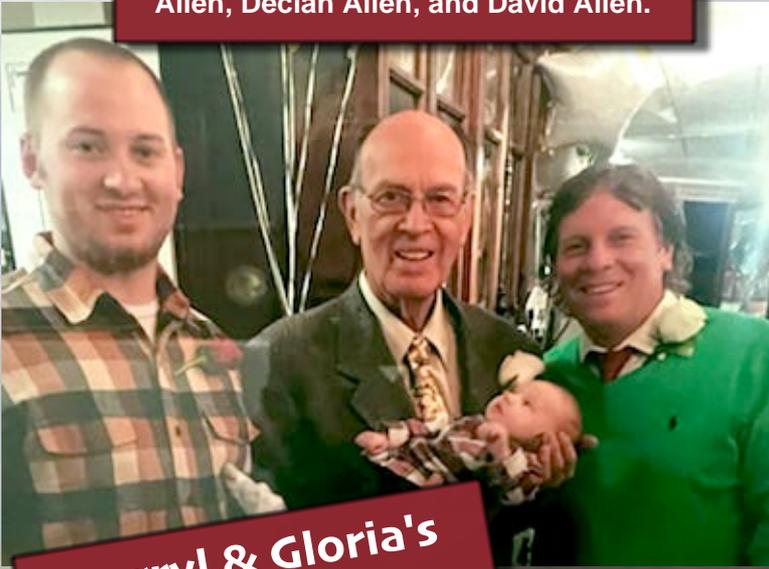


The Woods Children & Spouses, Front: Carolyn, Darryl, and Sally Back: Jim, Gloria, and Bruce.



Four Generations: Thurman Allen, Derek Allen, Darryl Allen, and David Allen.

Four Generations: Derek Allen, Darryl Allen, Declan Allen, and David Allen.



Darryl & Gloria's Family



Gary, Darryl, and Seve



Gloria, Elsa, and Darryl

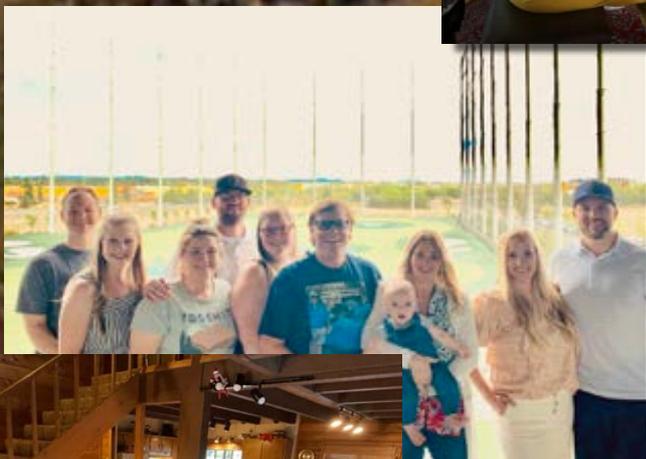


Gary Woods Family

Doris Woods at Darryl's Piano



Gloria, Ole, and Darryl



Dave Woods Family



Gloria & Dave Woods
May 22, 2022, Dave's
60th Birthday



Carrolyn & Jim's Family



Grandson Leighton & Great Granddaughter Aubrey

Shelli & Granddaughter Taylor



Son Kirk's Family

Sally & Bruce's Family



Sally & Bruce, Daughters Andi Ocken-Taylor and Husband Bill, & Jeni VanDusen & Husband Rich with Grandchildren Aiden & Darby Taylor.

*This article is written with information and photographs from phone and in-person interviews with Gloria Gimle Woods, David Woods, Gary Woods, Randy Woods, Carrolyn Woods Nicholas, Sally Woods Ocken & Alette Lanchester (May 20-May 30, 2022). Some information is taken from various Modesto Bee and Turlock Journal articles and images.

Updates



Clarice the Red Cow



Suzanne Love & Don Scott



Justin & Briana Alvarez

- June is Dairy Month, and The Museum Store is proud to now carry the book and plush of “Clarice the Red Cow” by Maureen Lemos.
- The MM&HS has once again started a dialog with Parks, Recreations, and Neighborhoods to prepare for future endeavors which pertain to our beloved Museum, May 10, 2022.
- The MM&HS is currently digitizing all issues of “Stanislaus Steppingstones” to hopefully be available to the public.
- The Board of the McHenry Museum & Historical Society met on May 24, 2022.
- Our Annual Meeting is back! Members will receive an invite in the mail before June 13th inviting you June 28, 2022, at 5:30pm, as well as a list of current willing new board members. If you would like to RSVP early, please call David Seymour at (209) 618-5387 or email him at david@mchenrymuseum.org. Please leave a message and will add you to the list.
- The McHenry Museum turns 50 years old on July 4, 2022. The MM&HS will be hosting a ribbon cutting and mixer with the Modesto Chamber of Commerce on July 6, 2022, at 4pm with a ribbon cutting on the Museum steps. More details will be sent to members via email during the month of June.
- We would like to thank outgoing Board President Don Scott for all his work for our organization. He will be staying on as an adviser as we would be lost without his input.
- We would also like to thank Suzanne Love for all her hard work the last seven years as she too is retiring from our Board of Directors.
- New exhibit expected in the Museum’s changing exhibit room starting the first weekend of June, the art of Jonathan Troxler.
- We would like to thank Janice Lane, Nancy Norton, Sergio Chevalier, and our newest volunteer, Christopher Nunes for working our Museum Store in the month of May.

The McHenry Museum & Historical Society would like to congratulate Mr. and Mrs. Justin & Briana (Castrejon) Alvarez on their May 28, 2022, wedding. Justin proposed to Briana in our Museum Diner on October 31, 2021. They were the subject of our November 2021 Newsletter. We wish the happy couple many happy returns. A love story that started in our beloved Museum.

