

## Thiel, Betty Jane Bunkelman

Betty Jane Bunkelman Thiel, the lady known for her lovely smile, passed away at 3:38 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2007, at Ollie Steele Burden Nursing Home in Baton Rouge. She was 85, born in Seymour, Wis., on June 9, 1921. After finishing high school in Seymour, she entered nursing training at Bellin Memorial School of Nursing in Green Bay, Wis. After Pearl Harbor, she volunteered for service in the U.S. Army Air Forces. She became a flight nurse, having served in the South Pacific flying to various islands picking up military patients. After the end of World War II, Lt. Bunkelman left the service and returned to Wisconsin and continued nursing. She is survived by her husband of 58 years, Arthur Thiel, and their three children, Sal and husband Joe of North Carolina, Bill and wife Fay of Michigan, and Jim and wife Tonya of Oregon. She is also survived by her sister, Virgie Demske of Texas; seven grandchildren and a great-granddaughter. Betty moved with her family to Baton Rouge in 1959. The three young children wanted their mother to be at home rather than return to nursing, enabling her to become active in the church, schools and community. The family joined Broadmoor Methodist Church and Betty held office in United Methodist Women and Church Women United. She delivered Meals on Wheels for many years and served in a number of community activities. Betty also became well known for her great cooking. All of her children shared this great love with her. A private graveside service will be held at Port Hudson National Cemetery, Zachary. Memorial service at Broadmoor Methodist Church at 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 27. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be sent to Broadmoor Methodist Church, 10230 Mollylea Drive, Baton Rouge, LA 70815, Hospice of Baton Rouge, 9063 Siegen Lane, Suite A, Baton Rouge, LA 70810 or to a charity of

Thought you would  
like to know. She was  
buried in the Port  
Hudson cemetery near  
Baton Rouge.

Art Thiel

Art and Betty Thiel  
5445 Government St., Apt. 321  
Baton Rouge, LA 70806



# Tree Tales

## Readers share Christmas tree memories

By **ED CULLEN**  
Advocate staff writer

Think of the holiday season and possibly one of the first images that comes to mind is a Christmas tree. There was the one with the crooked base that had to be supported with fishing line, the one that came crashing to the floor in the middle of the night with the help of the family cat, the one that shed all its needles days before Santa's visit...

Everyone has at least one story, and we asked our readers to share their most memorable ones with us for December's "Readers Write In" feature. Here are the ones they are still talking about.

### An Old Baton Rouge story

From Hettie Jean Babin Tuminello came this Old Baton Rouge story.

"Growing up on Government Street on a high hill directly across the street from the old Baton Rouge General Hospital, I helped my mother put up our tall, fat Christmas tree in the center of our large, glassed-in front porch," Tuminello said.

"Our best decorators, however, were the fourth-floor operating room nurses who had a bird's eye view from the General. They would call every half hour or so to tell us to move more green lights to the left side or fill in the top more to evenly distribute the colors."

### A folding tree from home

Betty Bunkelman Thiel was an Army flight nurse in the Admiralty Islands, northeast of New Guinea.

"I have a letter I wrote to my parents in December of 1944," Thiel said.

In the letter, which Thiel's mother saved, the young nurse describes the reception given a present sent to her from her parents in Wisconsin.

In the package from home, the nurses found "a folding Christmas tree with green needles and tiny bells.

"We all got busy decorating the tree. First, we put the tree on a box and used white cotton to cover the top of the box and make it look like snow.

"In my letter, I wrote that we used red and pink fingernail polish to cover small sea shells to hang on the tree. We also chewed gum like mad so we could use the tinfoil for icicles.

"I'll always remember how the bells jingled as we walked across the floor. I remember many of us shed tears when the music on the loudspeaker played 'White Christmas.'

"Our little Christmas tree with the jingling bells reminded us of home and everyone was comforted by my parents' special gift to us all."

