

## PHYLLIS SUSANNE DIGIACOMO DUNNAM



**COOK-WALDEN**  
Forest Oaks • Funerals & Cremations  
6300 W. William Cannon Dr.  
892-1172

### **Phyllis Susanne DiGiacomo Dunnam, Ph.D. October 18, 1927 December 30, 2006**

Born October 18, 1927 in Brooklyn, New York the third child of Philip and Catherine DiGiacomo. She graduated valedictorian from her high school and received a full scholarship to St. Joseph's College, graduating in 1949 with honors. She taught in a Staten Island High School and joined the US Navy and proudly served as an Ensign in communications in Naval Intelligence during the Korean War where she met and married 1st Lieutenant William H. Dunnam USMC. After their discharge from the service they moved to Corpus Christi, Texas, where she gave birth to sons Robert and James in 1954 and 1955. It was in 1963 that the death of her husband changed her life that sent her on a journey and mission to engage in academic pursuits for the betterment of herself and a quest to challenge the status quo of the educational system. She taught English in the Corpus Christi Independent School District for 20 years and was the Principal and Administrator for the Port Aransas School District for three years. Throughout her teaching career she developed life long relationships with faculty, parents and students who lovingly referred to her as Mother Dunnam, which remain to this day. She earned a Masters in Education from Texas A&I Kingsville and a Ph.D. in counseling from Union Graduate School in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 1979 she left the teaching profession and moved to New York City where she embarked on a career in counseling for corporate human resources at a time when large downsizing of companies became the norm. She became Executive VP of Drake, Beam and Morin (DBM) from 1982 until her retirement in 1999. She moved to Austin in 1991 to open and establish the Austin office of DBM when she secured the IBM contract for outplacement services. She was an intelligent, wise, compassionate and thoughtful woman with a great insight that captivated listeners of all walks of life. Her knowledge was highly sought after and was considered a "counselor's counselor," a "teacher's teacher" and a "corporate grandma." One of her crowning achievements before she passed was the publication of her memoirs entitled Walk Away in the Sunshine, which describes, "What is really wrong in education today." She was very politically informed, a believer in the public school system, a staunch Democrat, and liberal to the end. Throughout her extended illness that ravaged her body she remained optimistic and shared with her family and friends her wisdom of life, its transitions, and leaving the world a better place. She is survived by her two devoted sons Robert and James, their respective spouses Sherry and Tracey, two grandsons Zack and Tyler, her brother the Rev. James DiGiacomo S.J., her nephews Philip and David DiGiacomo, and numerous cousins, aunts, and a wealth of extended devoted friends too numerous to mention. The family would like to thank the staff at Stonebridge Health Center for the years of care, Dr. Thomas Hill, Dr. Milton Shepperd, Laura Eisenberg RN-FNP and the staff at Christopher House. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research or The Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders through the Austin Community Foundation. Memorial services will be held Saturday, January 13, 2007 at 2:00 p.m. in the chapel of Cook Walden/Forest Oaks, 6300 W. William Cannon Drive.

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