

Little Nash, Sunny Nash's Mother

Sunny Nash

My mother was a beautiful woman, elegant in everything she did. She did her best to teach me how to live and be elegant, too. I can only try to live up to her standards. But I do try.

I still grieve over the loss of my mother, never having accepted the idea that I would one day have to live without her. I was not there when it happened. I was at an airport awaiting a connecting flight to take me to her. During my wait at the airport, I listened to music on the intercom at the restaurant that reminded me of her and my heart wandered back in time when we were both still young.

My heart still wanders back to times we had together, times I shall never forget. She was my best friend for the rest of her life and I believe beyond. She was always there for me, telling me I could do something that seemed to me at the time to be impossible and then I did it. She was right, as usual. Through her, I became capable of so much more than I would have had it not been for my mother. I had a career in music and later in journalism and now I am an author because my mother believed in me and said I could. And I am. Below is the obituary I wrote for my mother.



Little V. Gibbs Nash, born in 1928, was the youngest child of James and Edna Minor Gibbs, owners of more than 500 acres of fertile land in Grimes County, Texas. During the harshest decades of Texas history for the descendants of former slaves, Nash and her four sisters and two brothers were encouraged to read, and study art, music and languages. Nash, who grew up during the Great Depression, educated in some of the poorest black schools in Texas, developed as an artist, poet, singer-songwriter and an award-winning industrial and nutritional chef.

Nash graduated from Carver High School in Navasota, Texas, in 1947 and began her career in the 1950s as a domestic worker in private homes because that was the only profession open to African American women at that time and then trained as a practical nurse. In that capacity, in the 1960s, Nash began creating healthy meals for diabetics, heart patients and others with special dietary needs. By substituting ingredients in popular foods without sacrificing taste, Nash pioneered in the field of food

technology and nutrition.

Little Nash 1928-2008

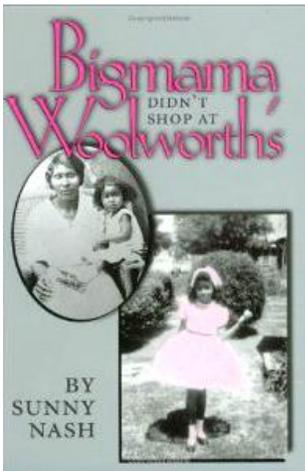
In 1967, she joined the staff of Sherwood Nursing Home in Bryan, where she became Director of Food Services, in charge of training and supervising kitchen and service staff. One of the first African Americans in Brazos County to hold an administrative position in her field, Nash became credentialed in food technology and nutritional services with training at Blinn College and Texas A&M University and traveled throughout the State of Texas conducting nutrition seminars and food service training workshops. In 1980, Nash retired and devoted the rest of her life to her first loves—her family and helping others

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When I began writing a history column for the local newspaper in the 1990s, my mother encouraged me to focus the column around the experiences her mother, my part-Comanche grandmother, Bigmama (*left: 1929 with my mother*) My mother then advised me to use the local column to build my reputation as a writer. She was right again. The local column led to a regional column and then a syndicated column and eventually gave birth to my first book, [*Bigmama Didn't Shop At Woolworth's*](#) (Texas A&M University Press).



Both my mother and my grandmother had a tremendous impact on my life--Bigmama gave me the old ways of her ancestors, both African and Native American; my mother gave me the modern ways and the tools I would need to succeed in the world that was just over the horizon during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s when I grew up. Both ways of thinking were important to my survival and developme

During that time in my life, my mother said I was a little hostile for no reason. I have to admit that I was hostile. It can still show in my face if I am not careful about my expression. “You’ve had it pretty easy as far as I can see,” my mother said. “We (meaning her generation) have prepared the way. All you have to do is walk it. It won’t be easy but the path is there. Now go write!”

And write I did. I wrote until I wasn’t hostile anymore. Now I write to share, to teach and to have fun. My book, *Bigmama Didn't Shop At Woolworth's* was selected by the Association of American University Presses as resources to the understanding of U.S. race relations.

“You have everything you need to make something of yourself,” my mother said to me over and over again when I was a child. “What a waste it would be if you don’t do something important with it.”



I am not sure how my mother managed, but there was always money for books, piano and dance lessons, costumes, classical music and jazz recordings and a

machine on which to play them. She was lofty in her habits. In my room, there was a corner, similar to the one on the left, devoted to reading and my studies. That little reading corner was more important to me than my bed. There, I learned what education was all about--learning to learn, as useful to me as my degree from Texas A&M University.

The most important lesson I learned from my mother was the importance of helping others. No matter how much you may have, it doesn't mean very much if you don't help others. "Use whatever you rigifts are--money, knowledge, experience, hope--to enrich someone else," my mother taught me.