

The Survivor - The Mother - The Grand Laker

Story By Bart Montgomery

Raised in T-Town, Theresa Swift was hardly a stranger to Grand Lake. Her mother grew up in the Ketchum area so the bond to northeast Oklahoma's treasure was strong and true. The creation of many of her fondest memories took place where she least wanted to leave; the same place to which she knew, one day she would have to return.

"I've been coming here since I was a little girl. We were always doing something on Grand Lake," said Swift.

Upon facing the real world, her career path ventured right into property management where she remained for nearly 20 years. The experience allowed for an easy transition into property development where Swift specialized in tax credit applications which were a very competitive, but also profitable portion of the industry. Then there came one of those critical moments when it was time for a change. The beautiful mountains of Colorado ended up being her getaway destination, but what happened afterward translated into a high life of a different sort.

"It's where I met my husband Bill. It's funny. I had joked about meeting a mountain man. I actually met him at a hunting camp and we ended up falling in love. I had gone back to Oklahoma but he kept pursuing me so I moved up there with him for about three years, but we got married after two," said Swift.

Strangely enough, they neither got married in Oklahoma or Colorado. They paid a visit to Arkansas to exchange their vows. It was their second choice actually, but as it turned out, the momentous occasion provided her father with a chance to give her an amusing memory that would last a lifetime.

"We were going to get married on the Cherokee Queen because I had so many fond memories of the Midnight Cruises when I was younger but that didn't work out. The wedding was still nice, though. We had it in Eureka Springs and my dad gave us a moment we could never forget. When he was asked to step up and give the bride away, he said no, because every time he gives her away, they keep giving her back!" she said with a smile.

Having a desire to be closer to her wacky but loving family, Swift then had to devise a plan to get Bill out of Colorado and onto Grand Lake. Utilizing a very impressive strategy, she intentionally avoided the months of July and August when bringing him home for visits. Being that Bill was a professional painter, he probably wouldn't take kindly to temperatures that are known to soar past the 90-degree mark. She also needed to replace the gorgeous mountains with something that was at least as equally appealing and



Theresa and Bill Swift: Grand Lakers willing to share the dream with others.

that's where the giant, grandeur body of water came into play. When discussions about moving became more serious they were fortunate enough to have a very intriguing offer dropped in their laps. A place they could stay in Courthouse Hollow. And the best part? It was right on the water.

"I needed to come back to Oklahoma and be closer to my parents. This opportunity worked out perfectly. It was lakefront property. Since then we've never lived anywhere else but on lakefront property," said Swift.

After returning home she took jobs around the Grand Lake area mostly in accounting-related industries before being introduced to the arena of home loans. Her skill with numbers and love of people made it a perfect match and once her feet got wet she took a position at Allied Home Mortgage in 2003. Five years later she was offered the Branch Manager position at a new location in Grove.

"It allows me to meet a lot of great people. Most of them say that they came here on vacation, fell in love with the lake, and then wanted to move here. The day that you close is the most rewarding," said Swift.

Although home ownership can be a life-altering experience, it's nothing compared to the possibility of your life being snatched away from you like a rodent in the claws of a predatory bird. In 2005 Swift faced such a possibility when a mammogram and subsequent tests revealed she had breast cancer. She was immediately faced with a decisive battle, but fortunately, it was a battle that she wouldn't have to face alone.

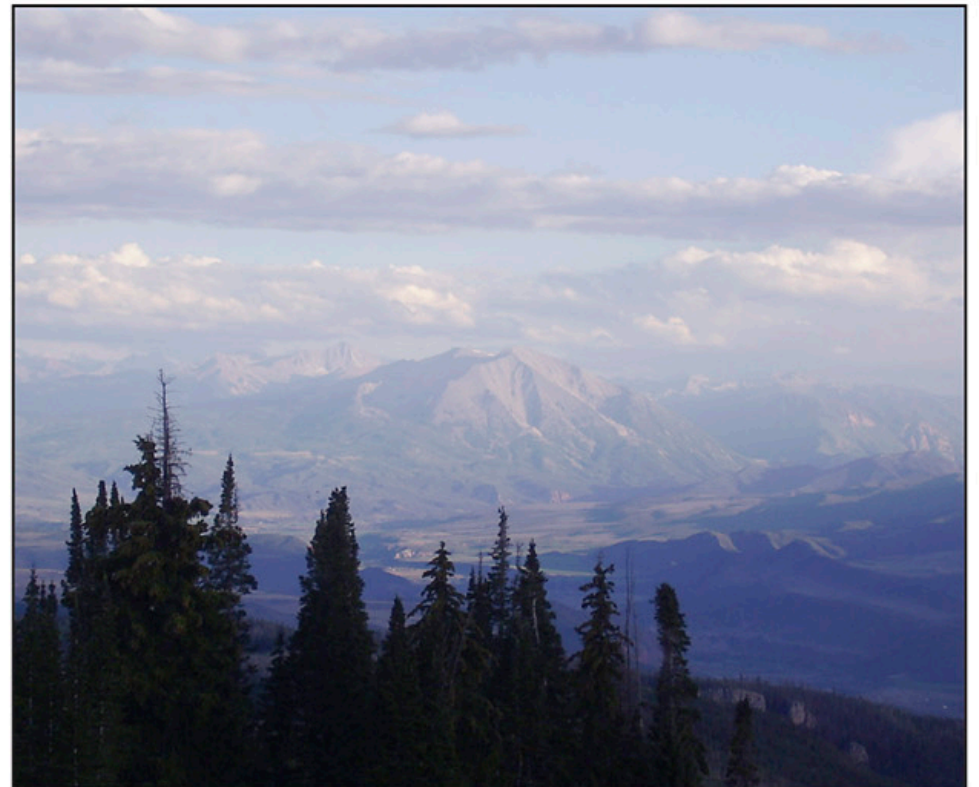
"I'm a fighter and I've always been a

couldn't have done it without them either," said Swift.

Part of what made her stronger is what one might call Grand Therapy. Every single morning she got up and watched the sun rise above the lake. It was a spiritual, but private moment that put her life into perspective. It's a perspective that she still appreciates today. In every sunrise. In every tree. In every flower. In every cloud hovering from above. Life isn't just good, it's Grand.

"What I went through made me realize that everything I have in life is a blessing," said Swift.

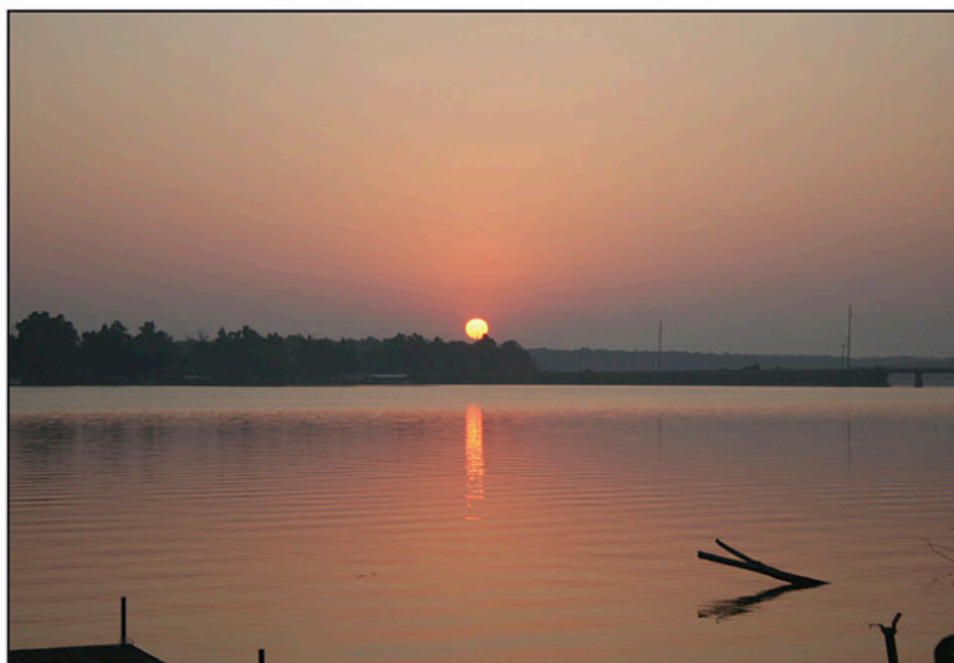
Among those blessings are children. Last January she and her husband addressed an issue that has become a profound crisis in Delaware County; the need for Foster Parents. Recognizing that a child's desire to live in a loving home is not a fault, but a noble and understandable request, they've taken in nearly 10 children over the past nine months. They are currently caring for two young siblings that may have never known a better circumstance if the Swifts hadn't provided one for them. This treasure in northeast Oklahoma that her parents and grandparents shared with her as a child is now being shared with children that need a glimpse of pure beauty more than most. And they can forever be grateful to The Survivor - The Mother - The Grand Laker.



Theresa met her husband, Bill, in God's country; and she considers him to be one of the true blessings in her life.



Also an amateur photographer, Theresa captures beauty wherever she can find it.



One might call it Grand Therapy. A sunrise that only an area this lovely can offer.