

Leola Clarice Ott
1927 - 2020



Leola Clarice Ott, 92, died peacefully July 16, 2020, at her residence in La Verne, California. She was born in 1927 in Dorris, California, to Royal and Alice (Davis) Ott. Leola joined her sister, Lena, in a family that would later expand to include three brothers: Dale, Daniel, and Roy.

For the first five years of Leola's life, her family lived on a small farm near Macdoel, California. By 1932, her parents had bought and were operating a ranch situated astride the Oregon-California border. Leola's father also logged seasonally. The ranch house, located seven miles west of Dorris, afforded a beautiful view of Mount Shasta. The remoteness of the ranch and the harsh winters made life difficult at times, but the family's income was better than that of many during the Great Depression and happy times were interspersed between the long stretches of hard work.

Leola was seven years old when her father died in a logging accident in 1934. Her mother moved the family back to Macdoel and then three years later to Live Oak, California, to be near extended family. Leola and her siblings found work wherever they could, including long, hot, grueling shifts at the local Libby's cannery. The cannery provided not only better wages than most other summer jobs in the area, but also countless stories and cause for commiseration among themselves over the years.

Following her graduation from Live Oak High School in 1946, Leola continued her education at La Verne College (now the University of La Verne), graduating in 1950 with a degree in home economics. She taught homemaking at the high school in Orosi, California, and one of the junior high schools in Bakersfield, California, before returning to La Verne College in 1954 to head the Department of Home Economics. To support her faculty appointment, Leola earned a master's degree in home economics at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her tenure of 16 years at La Verne College ended when the home economics program was eliminated. A year later she took an office job with a variety of responsibilities at Deloitte Haskins & Sells in downtown Los Angeles. She worked at Deloitte for 21 years until her retirement in 1992 at age 65.

Leola resided in Southern California, primarily in Pomona and La Verne, for nearly 70 years. She took full advantage of the Southland's varied geographical areas, cultural venues, restaurants, bakeries, farmers' markets, and novelty stores. She loved traveling (her two trips to Europe were highlights), spending time at the beach, and "going places" (congested freeways were no deterrent). She was enamored of birds of all kinds, and many paintings and figurines of such adorned her home.

Leola was an active, lifelong member of the Church of the Brethren. For all of her many years in Southern California, the La Verne church was central in her life as both a place of worship and a community of friends. She faithfully attended Sunday services and took special care to greet newcomers afterward in the church courtyard. She was a welcome presence in the lives of many families of the congregation. Leola volunteered with the Fellowship Visitors program and served as a delegate from the La Verne congregation to one of the annual conferences. The varied programs and activities offered by the church greatly enriched her life; she particularly enjoyed the birdwatching tours led by Jeff Stroger.

Thanks to an exceptionally good memory, Leola had lots of family history at her disposal and many entertaining stories from her past to tell. Indeed, Leola was a very sociable person who cherished her time spent with family and friends. More than anything, she enjoyed being around children. She spent countless hours with her five nieces and four nephews as they grew up, often affording their parents much needed time off. Rare was the time when she missed a niece or nephew's theater performance, recital, or graduation. Her role as "aunt" to the children of good friends grew in one case to that of becoming "grandma" to one Scott Owen.

Leola delighted in her late-in-life romance with Don Charles, with whom she entered a relationship at the spry age of 80, give or take. She and Don shared many interests, including stargazing and attending musical and educational programs. She remained devoted to Don until his death in 2016. Leola was generous, caring, and always willing to lend a helping hand. Her family and friends will miss her dearly.

Leola is survived by her sister Lena Ott Coffman of La Verne and brother Dale Ott of Geneva, Switzerland; nieces Andrea Coffman (Larry), Valerie Coffman, Suzanne Coffman, Carolyn Thomas, and Dana Bailey (Robert); and nephews Robert Coffman (Victoria), David Ott, Tim Ott (Elizabeth), and Doyle Ott (Gwen). Leola also leaves behind sisters-in-law Jeaneen Ott and Edith Ott. She was preceded in death by her significant other Donald "Don" Charles, brothers Daniel "Dan" Ott and Roy Ott, and niece Carolyn's husband Darren Thomas.

As Leola had requested, her body was donated to the Western University of Health Sciences in Pomona for teaching and research purposes; eventually her cremains will be scattered at sea. A memorial service will be prerecorded for online viewing; please contact the La Verne Church of the Brethren, office@lavernecob.org, for more information. Memorial donations may be made to the National Audubon Society, www.audubon.org; or the La Verne Church of the Brethren, 2425 E St, La Verne, CA 91750.