

Leotta Reeves Louks Stancik:
A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW'S PERSPECTIVE

I first met her in 1966, during the Little Rock University basketball season. Tom played on the LRU team and they were playing Henderson College in a tournament in Pine Bluff. She picked me up and we rode together to the game. I'm not sure why, but I was expecting a woman who was quite, shall we say, large??? When I opened the door, there stood the cutest little woman I have ever seen. Probably no more than 5', dressed in a gold-beige shirtwaist dress, and matching 2" pumps, tiny belted waist, and a thin mesh orange scarf protecting her perfectly styled brown hair. She was 43 years old at that time and remained for most of the 52 years to come, just that cute. At those games, if anyone got critical of Toms playing, she would come to his defense. I heard the story that when he was 12 and playing on a baseball team, she heard people in the bleachers behind her saying that he was so big, he couldn't be 12, he must be at least 16. She stood up, turned around and told them, in no uncertain terms, that he was her son, he was 12 years old, NOT 16, and if they wanted to step out to her car, she could show them his birth certificate, because she carried it with her! She was a gutsy little thing.

I came to know Leotta as someone who always lived in the moment, never disclosing or dwelling much of her past, and never showing worries for the future. She loved life, never met a stranger, and saw the best in everyone. Toms dad used to say, "She thinks the Devil is going to get saved, tomorrow."

Things Leotta will be remembered for, by her friends and family:

1. She was a Christian.
2. She gave credit for her being a Christian to her half brother, Larkie, who raised her and some of her siblings, after her mother died. Of Larkie Cobb, she always said, "Larkie was the best Christian I ever knew."

3. She loved her family and always put family first. That included extended family as well as immediate.
4. Tom was her only child and she adored him, but would quickly tell you, many times, that she almost died giving birth to him.
5. Leotta never learned to swim, ride a bicycle, or skate, but did love to play cards and eventually learned to bowl and bowled in leagues with a 140 average for almost 50 years.
6. She loved to fish, but only from the bank. Deep water scared her. She always blamed that on the boy who tried to dunk her in a creek when she was very young.
7. She left home after the ninth grade, never finishing school, ~~possibly after getting in trouble for skipping school with her friends. The principal told Larkie what she had done.~~ Soon after that She made her way to Little Rock and got a job taking care of two boys of the Treadway family. She also was to cook the evening meal for the family. This was scary because she did not know a thing about cooking. After she burned the first meal, Mrs. Treadway patiently taught her to cook. The first thing she learned to cook was hot dogs and sour kraut.
8. She became a good country cook. Her meals were always good, high on the carbs, but never included anything fancy or international. Just plain ol' country style American cooking, but no one ever left her table hungry.
9. She has always been a sports fan. She and Tom's dad probably went to all of Tom's games through the years, no matter what sport. She was an avid fan of the St. Louis Cardinals and up until about 5 years ago, she could always give you the score of the game, complete with stats on the players, and a spirited description of highlights of the game.
10. She loved pretty things. She loved flowers and loved having many flowers in her yard and if the real flowers were not blossoming to suit her, she was not above taking plastic flowers and stick them in the ground, basket, pot, etc.
11. She collected many things: dolls, bells, angels, angel pins, earrings, shoes, and so many, many, more.

Here at the end of her life, she has been a real fighter. For her last 9 or 10 days she was not showing recognition of anyone, not even Tom, and not talking, just lying there. But, one day, the hospice chaplain, Audey Long, went in and told her he wanted to pray with her. To his surprise, She started praying out loud, calling out the name of Jesus, telling Him she was ready to go, but in His time. In the end, all she knew, and all that mattered, was Jesus Christ.