



# Wanda Cooley

MAY 14, 2017



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## **Wanda Cooley**

MAY 14, 2017

**W**anda was born the third child to Joseph and Bertha Royer Smith in Oretta, LA on May 11, 1922, and entered her long deserved eternal rest on Sunday, May 14, 2017 at the age of 95. After graduating from DeQuincy High School in 1938, she moved with her family to Lake Charles where her mother ran two boarding houses for Sowela Tech, and she helped prepare the meals. This was the beginning of a long career of preparing food for a large number of people.

Later she worked as a telephone operator for Bell Telephone Co. and on Nov 12, 1942 married her childhood sweetheart from Singer, Burton Winfred Cooley. Together they had three children, Carolyn Bushnell [Ronnie], Robert W. Cooley [Karen], and Rebecca Deggs [Ricky].

They moved from Singer in 1954 to DeRidder where she became actively involved in the Choir, Ladies Auxiliary, and the Church Nursery at First Pentecostal Church, and she continued to oversee & work in the nursery until she brought her elderly mother to her home in 1990. Also during these years, she was asked and began a long period of organizing and preparing meals for bereaved families in the church.

In 1967 she became aware of the need to once again seek outside employment, and went to work in the Soft Goods Dept of the West Bros Dept Store Main Office, which was responsible for ordering all of the soft goods for all of the West Bros branch stores and the Gibson Discount Stores. Not long after, the supervisory position became available and she was asked to fill it. When she inquired why she was asked to fill the position, her superior told her “if you can handle



a large group of ladies at your church, you certainly can do this.” She continued working until she had to help care for her elderly in-laws.

In 1980 Wanda became a Charter Member of the Beauregard Memorial Baptist Hospital Ladies Auxiliary ‘Pink Ladies,’ which she dearly loved serving in various capacities through the years. During the last few years, when she became unable to physically contribute hours at the hospital, she became the “phone person” and continued to provide needed help. She loved the phone job—from years spent as a switchboard operator.

She loved to crochet, sew, and was a master quilter. She made a quilt that won first prize and was auctioned off to raise money for a new church building at Singer. Her mother bought it and gave it back to her for Christmas that year. She crocheted many tablecloths and bedspreads for her children and grandchildren, and made them a quilt for a wedding gift. In her last years she crocheted baby blankets for them to have for their first babies as she knew she would not be here. She made and gave away numerous potholders as Christmas gifts to her family & friends, and was making a blanket for Pam’s new grandbaby when she became ill.

While caring for her elderly mother, Wanda attended Grace which had just begun having services, and became a Charter Member. After her mother passed away, once again she immediately became involved in cleaning the church and helping with fund-raising for a new building. After Grace moved into the newly renovated Piggly Wiggly building, she once again was rocking babies in a church nursery and cooking meals for bereaved families. As she became older and was unable to lift toddlers, she was content to focus on just taking care of the bereaved families—which she did faithfully until because of her age was no longer to stand for long hours.

Wanda is survived and will be greatly missed by her three children and spouses, five grandchildren: Debbie Petry [Lamar], Melanie Schwarzer [Rod], Robert Cooley, Jr, Heather



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Aymond [Joe], Erika Anderson [Brad]; twelve great-grandchildren: Jacob Petry [Kaitlyn], Alex Schwarzer [Jessica], Jesse Petry [Lauren], Zachary Schwarzer, Carli Anderson, Carrington Anderson, Madeleine Schwarzer, Camille Petry, Braeden Anderson, Gabriella, Genevieve, and Josiah Aymond; two great-great grandchildren: Blake and MaKenna Petry. She also leaves twelve nieces and nephews who knew her affectionately as “Auntie” and their families, a special cousin who was like a sister to her growing up, Comolete Alston Murdaugh, and her daughter Joyce Richard whom she loved dearly.

She is preceded in death by her parents, siblings Vernon C Smith, Dormon Davenport, and Kenneth C Smith.

In honoring her wishes, there will be no funeral service. Friends and family are invited to gather at Labby’s Funeral Home in DeRidder on Monday, May 15, 2017 from 5:00p.m. until 8:00p.m. to help celebrate her life. A private burial will be held later at her Alston family Cemetery in DeQuincy, LA.

In lieu of flowers, the family respectfully requests that memorials be made to Grace Church or the charity of your choice. We especially want to thank those who cared for her so graciously the last few weeks, BMBH nurse Ally Carhee, PT Tracey Winkley, Tri-Parish Rehab [Dana Hickman, Ne’Ne’ & Cathy], the Rosepine Retirement Home staff, nurses and aides, Heart of Hospice [Linda Young], and Pastor George Lee Glass and the staff of Grace. We will be forever grateful.



# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Wanda by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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