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Grandma Loa

At age 58, Loa unexpectedly found herself as a widow. She and Myral had been planning on happily living together enjoying school, music, the Church, and grandchildren for decades to come. When he passed away, Loa didn't stop her active lifestyle; rather she just continued doing the things she and Myral had always done, but by herself. However Loa's life changed again when an old friend, Gib Hutchings, asked her to marry him and move to Fresno. In her later years in both San Luis and Fresno, Loa continued to share her smile and her light with all she met.

Widowhood

Although suddenly a widow at age 58, Loa was not completely alone in her house yet. Clark Sandburg, a distant cousin, had already been living in Dick's old bedroom as he attended Cal Poly that year. Clark provided much care and attention as Loa adjusted to life without Myral.¹ The following year, Inez's daughter, Anita Waldron, replaced Clark at the house. Even though she had good company and help in the house, her children were still far away. Dick was on his mission, Robert was studying at Princeton, and Margene was in Ojai with Ed and their young children.

Two years after he left, Dick returned from his mission and resumed classes at Cal Poly. Before his mission, he had become acquainted with one Linda Lokken whose family had moved to San Luis Obispo. Now that he was back, Dick asked her to attend a Sacrament Meeting at which he was to speak. They hit it off and were married on March 2, 1968 in the Los Angeles Temple.²



Richard and Linda Clark, married March 2, 1968

While Dick and Linda were in San Luis attending Cal Poly, they had their first child, Judson, in March 1969. Loa was the babysitter of choice. She enjoyed taking care of Jud in the evening when his parents were either in class or out on a date. When Jud was one year old, they moved to North Edwards, California, leaving Loa without any family in San Luis again.³

At Cal Poly one year, Loa took a German language class, because she was curious to learn the language that her brother, Ivan, and son, Robert, had learned on their missions in Germany. In August 1966 Loa visited Robert who was living in Darmstadt, Germany as he researched for his doctrinal thesis. They traveled to cities in Germany where he had served during his mission, and met people whom he had baptized. Loa and Robert



*Loa and Robert with the Holgherr family
in Reutlingen, Germany, Aug. 1966*

also visited other famous European cities, including Paris and London. Before they went, he practiced certain German phrases with her, so she could answer herself when the Germans asked her how the trip was. Loa said about the trip, “I had a great time in Germany with my son Robert... the remembrance of it is something that I’ve treasured all my life.”⁴

After Myral died, Loa continued living in San Luis Obispo and teaching at Pismo School for eight more years until she retired at age sixty-five in the spring of 1971. She told a reporter at the local paper that she was planning on filling her time with being more involved with local art shows (she had recently taken a wood carving class), and visiting her grandchildren (she had been knitting all kinds of things for them). She also planned to continue tutoring school children, “There are so many children that need the help. I can’t see just



*Loa in front of the Paris Opera House,
Aug 1966*



Loa at retirement - 1971

altogether stopping my work.”⁵ Additionally, Loa planned to continue her involvement with The Monday Club, The American Association of University Women, The International Reading Association, and Delta Kappa Gamma—the international society for women educators.⁶

Sixty-five year old Loa didn’t think she would marry again, so she planned to remain in her home on Mission Street and enjoy life, travel the world, and be active in the community. Even though Loa kept herself busy, nearly eight years of widowhood was wearing on her. She was lonely, and she was aging.

Loa and Gib

One day in 1971, Loa's plans for continuing her single life in San Luis changed dramatically. She wrote about it as follows: "I was a widow for eight years, then a dear friend of mine [Alice Hutchings] died and eventually, her husband [Gib Hutchings], who had been our bishop in San Luis Obispo and had moved to Fresno, called me and asked if he could come over to see me and take me out to dinner. I didn't think I would ever marry again, but he was a very dear person and was very lonely. We enjoyed being together and he came to see me several times and asked me to marry him. I felt very good about it and my friends and family approved."²⁷

Gilbert Albert Hutchings was born in Beaver, UT on August 8, 1905. He was an active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-



Loa and Gib during their courtship in SLO, 1971

day Saints. He attended BYU and Utah State University, and became a high school teacher of Vocational Agriculture in California. He went on to become a Vocational Agricultural Supervisor and continued there until his retirement in 1971—about when he found Loa.⁸

Loa and Gib, both sixty-six years old, were married for time only in the Los Angeles temple on March 31, 1972. Loa then packed up her things and moved to Fresno. It must have been hard for Loa to leave San Luis Obispo and all her friends and organizations there. She had lived there 32 years. But Gib's friends and family in Fresno embraced her warmly.⁹ They lived at 3476 E Redlands Avenue in a lovely home in the wide, fertile San Joaquin Valley with glimpses of the mountains in the distance.¹⁰

As Loa and Gib were both enjoying retirement, they had ample time for travel. They visited Honolulu, Easter Island, and Russia.¹¹ Loa always kept a Hawaiian ukulele on a cabinet in the living as a reminder of the years she spent there. They loved visiting and being visited by all their

children and grandchildren. Loa sang the favorite lullaby “How Would You Like to go Up in a Swing?” to her little grandchildren. Even when Loa and Gib weren't visiting the grandchildren, they were still thinking of them, and showing their cute photographs to friends and neighbors.

Out on the east coast, Loa's son Robert was teaching at Princeton and had been dating Nancy Richards from Salt Lake City. They finally decided to get married and were sealed in the Salt Lake temple on August 30, 1980—the day before Robert turned 43. Loa was thrilled for him.

Sometime during her time in Fresno, Loa suffered a stroke and had to use a cane for a while. Although she received enough therapy to recover well, she was left much weaker. The stroke had robbed her of some of the independence she enjoyed.¹²



Robert and Nancy on their wedding day Aug 30, 1980



Richard, Margene, Loa, and Robert in February 1978

Gib was called to be the stake patriarch and Loa was his scribe. Members seeking patriarchal blessings came to their home in Fresno. Gib gave the blessings and Loa recorded them, transcribed them, and sent a copy to the member.¹³

In her twenty years in the Fresno 6th ward, Loa served in various callings—the Mother Education Teacher in Relief Society, the Sunday School music director, and the Fresno East Stake Primary Music Director.¹⁴ As she loved learning, Loa also took a music conductor's class and a genealogy class at church.



Loa and Gib ca. 1985

In her later years, Loa was an avid family historian. She paid yearly dues to the family history societies of the Tolmans, the Clarks, the Stevensons, and the Bates. She collected binders full of pedigree charts. She wrote many letters to family members requesting their life stories, and she wrote letters to people sharing her memories of them to add to their own binders. She gathered all the notes she had taken of her own life

events, and kept careful track of all of Myral's photo books, scrapbooks, and diaries. It's because of her careful diligence in preserving those records that this biography is possible. She once wrote of her family history efforts, "It is thrilling to get all these things together to pass on to our children."¹⁵

In her later years, even though she forgot names of roommates and schools, she still remembered excerpts from poems she had learned in elementary school. She proudly recited them and said that memorizing poems had always meant a great deal to her, because "If we work hard enough we can reach our goal."¹⁶

Loa's Passing

Near the end of her life, Loa's heart began to fail. She began to take pills to lower the level of fluid in her blood.¹⁶ She became weaker and weaker. As she lay in bed resting at the end of her life, she probably remembered the time when she was twelve and sick with rheumatic fever on her bed in the living room. She was so sick that no one thought she would live. But she did live. She was 12



*Loa and her cousin Amy Okleberry, ca. Aug 8, 1983
See "Elementary School Days" section in this book
to see a photo of them as children together*

years old when her life was spared, and now she was 86—that's a gift of 74 years on this Earth. Loa had lived a wonderful life, and she must have felt very content with it. She had raised three faithful children in the Gospel and had seen them all sealed in the temple and have children. She had been a part of the Church's pioneering efforts in Murtaugh, in Hawaii, and in San Luis Obispo. She had helped hundreds of school children learn to read. She had blessed the lives of so many people as she sang with her beautiful voice. Even her beautiful smile had filled everyone she met with joy. Truly her life was one pleasing to the Lord.

As her body became weaker and as she came to know the end was coming, she probably thought a lot about Myral. She had last seen him 28 years prior. How excited she must have been to see him again.

For a few nights when she had trouble sleeping, she called her son Robert and they sang “In Our Lovely Deseret” and “The Swing” together to bring them comfort. On November 9, 1992, she lay down on the sofa to have a peaceful Monday afternoon nap, and slipped into a coma for a few minutes. When Gib came in to check on her, she had already passed away—quietly and painlessly.¹⁷

After so many years apart, Loa was reunited with Myral, along with her parents, and all her siblings who had passed on before her. And together she and they will “wait joyfully with those of us who follow, for the promised resurrection”¹⁸ when we shall receive perfected bodies, see our God, and receive eternal life.

May we, their descendants, all live so that Loa and Myral’s lives of faith, service, education, music and love will be remembered and honored. Their hopes lie with us.



Loa and Myral Clark, ca. 1960

