



## Doris Fietkau Harper

July 28, 1930 - May 17, 2018

Doris Fietkau Harper was born July 28, 1930, in Arcadia, Utah, to Bessie Horrocks and Reed Fietkau. Her early years in Duchesne were in humble circumstances. Their family home was smaller than a typical garage, with an outhouse that felt miles away during cold winter nights in the Uintah basin. They bathed youngest to oldest on Saturday nights in a round, tin tub with water from the pump outside that had been warmed on the kitchen stove. Doris and her two sisters slept on metal springs in the living room. When it was cold they huddled next to the kitchen stove or the open oven door to get warm.

When Doris was 11 her family moved to Springville. Their new home felt like a palace. It had luxuries like an indoor bathroom with hot and cold running water, a furnace, a refrigerator, and two bedrooms. Doris grew up happy and involved. She played the cornet in the school band and enjoyed the association of a wonderful group of friends who stayed connected for many years.

Doris had beautiful, shoulder-length red hair that she took pride in keeping curled and styled. She went to get a trim at a local beauty shop and the beautician chopped her hair off just below the ears. Doris and her sisters cried and cried about this.

Doris' mother, Bessie Fietkau, kept their house spotless and taught her girls to work hard. Doris had jobs picking cherries, working at Eddington's cannery, and waitressing at Monty's restaurant. She attended BYU for a time and learned shorthand and typing skills.

When Doris was twenty-two, one of her high school friends, Geraldine Murray, was roommates with Carma and Carol Harper. They set Doris up on a blind date with Carma and Carol's brother, Leslie Harper.

It was love at first sight for Les. He took one look at Doris and thought, "That will work for me." They were together constantly after their first date and were engaged in six weeks. Les went to California to work for the six months of their engagement. The separation was hard for both of them, but they exchanged many letters. Les wrote, "Oh if I could just hold

you in my arms instead of writing this damn letter my troubles would be over.” A letter from Doris ended with, “And even though I miss you so very much, I couldn’t be happier because I’m so in love, and to think that the most wonderful fellow in the world has asked me to marry him. I think I’m the luckiest girl ever.”

They were married on September 8, 1953, in the Salt Lake Temple, then moved to California to live with Les’ brother Tom and his wife Dee for a year while Les attended Chaffey Junior College. Doris worked as a secretary for the International Machinist Union until the birth of their daughter, Laura Mae, on June 3, 1954. They moved back to Utah soon after so Les could continue his education at BYU. Les worked Eddington’s Cannery for 75 cents an hour. Doris’ parents seemed to know just when their pantry was empty and invited them for dinner.

Les and Doris were devoted parents. Laura loved raspberries, so even though money was tight they bought them for her, but didn’t eat any themselves. They took Laura in for a photo session and bought a few small pictures. The photo studio decided Laura was a beautiful baby and featured a big picture of her in their front window. Les and Doris were delighted and wanted to buy it, but after hearing the price Les took a picture of the window instead.

Les worked 40 hours a week at Geneva Steel in addition to carrying 18 credits in chemical engineering. Larry was born during this busy time. From the beginning Doris was the mainstay in taking care of their home and family. Laura once asked, “Mommy, where does Daddy live?”

Les graduated from BYU in 1957 and Mike came along the next year. In 1962 they moved to Academy Park, where Linda was born. When Linda started first grade, Doris began working at Academy Park Elementary as a secretary. Doris served as stake primary secretary for many years, taught sewing in 4H, and handled things at home while Les served as bishop and stake president. She was an excellent homemaker, cook, and seamstress. Their home was a gathering place for family and their children’s friends where Doris served wonderful food and made everyone feel loved and welcome.

In 1978 they moved to Diamond Bar, California. Doris was a good sport about the move, but she missed her Utah blue skies and really missed her family there, especially Laura, Larry, and Mike. For the first several years in California they traveled back to Utah every five weeks or so for Linda’s orthodontist appointments. It would have been easier to find a new orthodontist, but Doris thought it was a great excuse to visit.

She served as Relief Society president in Diamond Bar. Being in front of people and in charge was completely out of her comfort zone, but she fulfilled her calling with grace and dignity and was a loving friend to the women in her ward.

Even with her children living far away, family was always Doris' focus. She and Les collected recipes from relatives and put together family cookbooks for both the Harpers and Fietkaus, and created directories to keep everyone in touch. Doris kept journals about conversations with her children and recorded cute things the grandkids said and did. She and Les made their house a haven for their grandkids and loved their visits. Doris took pictures of the entryway filled with their shoes, and after they went home she left the toys in the family room and the sticky fingerprints on the patio door for several days to remember the fun times.

In 2002, Les and Doris moved back to Utah, to a beautiful home in Draper overlooking the Salt Lake Valley. They said they would be lucky to have five years in their new home, but instead had sixteen wonderful years. Their home was a gathering place for Sunday family dinners, sleepovers with grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Thanksgiving and Christmas parties. Doris never took her home or family for granted. She often said how grateful she was for a warm home and told family members she loved them.

Doris was always gentle, kind, patient, loving, and strong in her own way. Les called her the iron fist in a velvet glove. They were a great team who loved and depended on each other throughout their sixty-four years of marriage. Doris passed away at home on May 17, 2018, surrounded by her loving family. She was the heartbeat of the family and we all feel the loss of her presence.

Her funeral will be Friday, May 25, in the LDS chapel at 285 N Matterhorn Drive in Alpine. The visitation will be from 9:30-10:15, with the funeral at 10:30 a.m.

# Comments

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“ Doris was my mom away from home! I loved my visits to the Harper home where I truly felt welcomed and accepted. Doris always had a smile on her face and a twinkle in her eyes. She was patient, kind, loving and would do anything for anyone. Anytime I was there, she made her special Doris Harper Brownies! My mouth is watering as I think of them. She was an elect lady! Heaven is rejoicing in her return home. I know without a doubt that she was greeted with open arms by our Lord, Jesus Christ. Thoughts and prayers go out to the Harper family. Love you all, Les and Cindy Blades

**Cynthia Blades** - May 25, 2018 at 11:45 AM