



## Burdena M. Stokes

May 6, 1921 - January 14, 2017

Burdena Mae Stokes

“Dena”

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Burdena was born to parents Charles L. & Clara M. Chowning on May 6, 1921 in Mountain View, Missouri. The curious and adventuresome Dena was the youngest of four children.

In her early childhood, Dena’s father owned and operated C.L Chowning General Store in town. She enjoyed climbing trees and taking bottled milk to her paternal grandparents every evening. When the general store burned down in 1933, the family moved to a farm a few miles outside of town. During the depression, the family bartered vegetables and sold pigs for essentials.

As a teen, her mother worked as a traveling mid-wife and was away from the family home quite often. Dena worked with her sister, Reva and brother in-law after high school in their small café and then moved to live with sister, Olive and family until she got a job with a shipping company and later the US Census Bureau. By Dena’s own admission she along with her girlfriends liked to “party” and dance at the local “hot spots.”

In 1946 her mother died unexpectedly. Dena piled into one car with her sister, brother in-law, their brother Austin, two preschoolers and one baby in a basket and drove non-stop to Mountain View, (willow springs) Missouri. Staying there just a few years she had a bit of the wanderlust. Eventually returning home where her sister introduced her to a friend’s son who was home on leave from

the Navy. His name was Gilbert Green, and that motorcycling sailor soon became her husband.

In the early 1950's "Gib" (as Gilbert preferred to be called) was transferred by the Navy to Long Beach, California. Dena and daughter Cheryl traveled alone by car to live there. They were soon to move again to Alameda, California when Gib was reassigned. A few years later Gib left the Navy taking a job driving a city bus, moving them to Oakland, California. Then on to Fresno, California when he'd taken a job with Greyhound.

Dena liked baking and sewing, making almost all of hers and Cheryl's clothes. She was active in Cheryl's school as room mother, member of the PTA and a Girl Scout leader. Dena was always an avid reader and read to Cheryl when she was young. There were books of all kinds in their home. In the 1960's when Cheryl entered high school she began working part time as a bookkeeper for Frito Lay.

In the 1970's Dena was invited to join the Rebekah Lodge # 158. This became a large part of Dena's social life and lasted over twenty years. She spent time gardening growing vegetables and flowers. Roses were her favorite.

The early 1980's brought much change for Dena when Gib died in 1981. Never letting Cheryl know, it wasn't until many years later that Dena told her how frightened and vulnerable she'd felt during that time. Dena met Johnnie Stokes at the Odd Fellows Lodge the counterpart of the Rebekah's. She later married him, spending eighteen years of RV traveling across the US and Canada visiting family and friends. Johnnie was always looking for a "good deal, so they'd stop and shop at antique stores and flea markets. They had two rat terriers as their traveling companions. Enjoying listening too and playing music, Johnnie played the organ by ear and Dena the piano. They were members of the seniors group at Trinity Baptist Church. Dena enjoyed the fellowship and going to dinner with the group after church on Sunday evening and the Wednesday Family Dinners...no Mexican food. Too Spicy!

After John died in 1999 it took Dena awhile to get her bearings again. When she did she decided to try something new. She'd become a volunteer at Kaiser Hospital. She was assigned to the information desk at the main entrance. She really enjoyed this. As she battled the physical challenges of arthritis in her back and hip she didn't let that stop her from going out at least once a day. Shopping or lunch with her girlfriends kept her moving and active. In 2011, after taking a fall and breaking her femur at the age of 90 Dena wasn't able to walk without a walker and needed the help of in home caregivers to do the cooking and cleaning. Her caregivers became her new friends and source of social interaction. Their lives as well as Dena's were enriched by these relationships.

Dena wanted very much to live and to die in her own home. With the help of her caregivers and her daughter, she was able to do just that. On Saturday, January 14, 2017, in her home in Fresno, California, Dena passed peacefully away and now resides in Heaven. "Thank you, Jesus!"

# Cemetery Details

## **Belmont Memorial Park**

201 N. Teilman Avenue  
Fresno, CA 93706

# Tribute Wall



“ *Burdena M. Stokes*

September 15, 2022 at 09:34 PM



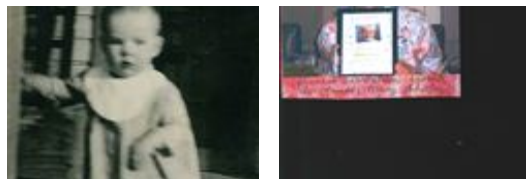
“ *84 files added to the album LifeTributes*



**Chapel Of The Light Funeral Home and Mausoleum** - January 27, 2017 at 12:39 PM



“ *2 files added to the album LifeTributes*



**Chapel Of The Light Funeral Home and Mausoleum** - January 26, 2017 at 11:30 PM