

In Memoriam

Lois Madden (Lohneiss) Todd (1923 - 2010)



Lois Madden (Lohneiss) Todd of Strathmore passed away Christmas day at the age of 87. She spent most of her life farming, growing and marketing avocados, citrus, Christmas trees, and figs for the family businesses.

Lois will be interred with her late husband, Theodore J. Todd, in Prescott, AZ.

She is survived by her brother, Harrington Madden (Virginia); her five children: Marla Lohneiss Dike (Bakersfield), Ellen Lohneiss (Torrance), William H. Lohneiss, Jr. (Escondido), Ann Burruss (Strathmore), and Carol Martinez (Camarillo); her seven grandchildren: Lori Pesante, Mark Blomer, Ian and Matthew Roberts, Elaine Burruss, and Kyle and Caitlin Martinez; and two great-grandchildren: Sean and Myra Blomer.

Lois was born June 21, 1923, in Bridgeport, Connecticut, to Harrington and Edith Madden. In 1948 she was the first woman to graduate from North Carolina State University with a degree in Chemical Engineering. Fifty years later, in 1998, she established the Lois Madden Todd Library Fellow which specifically supports the Chemical Engineering program at NC State.

After working as a chemist for John Robert Powers Cosmetics, Lois married William H. Lohneiss of Connecticut in 1950. Together they raised five children in Santa Barbara where the family grew avocados. After the marriage ended, Lois continued farming avocados and was very active with Calavo and the California Avocado Society.

In 1979 she married Theodore J. Todd of Corona and the couple continued to farm citrus and Christmas trees in Corona, avocados in Santa Barbara, and figs in Lost Hills in the San Joaquin Valley. Lois was instrumental in creating a large market for her fresh figs in the United States and Canada, as well as promoting avocados around the world while serving twice as president of the Avocado Society in 1977-78 and again in 1985.

When Lois and Ted retired from farming, they moved to Prescott, AZ, where Ted is laid to rest. After he passed in 2003, Lois moved to Strathmore to be close to family. Lois loved sewing and knitting for her children and grandchildren, and socializing with friends. But she never gambled. "Farming is a big enough gamble," she liked to say.