



Leola Elizabeth Gifford

May 2, 1913 - May 3, 2008

Leola Gifford, aged 95, lifelong resident of West Chauvez Road, Scottville, went peacefully to her heavenly home on Saturday, May 3, 2008 at the Willowbrook Care Home in Scottville, where she had been tenderly cared for during the last eleven months of her life. Leola Elizabeth was born on May 2, 1913 at the Riverton Township home of her parents Ray and Minnie (Dorn) Gifford. She attended East Riverton Grade School, and graduated from Ludington High School with the class of 1930. Always interested in education, Leola decided early on to dedicate herself to teaching, and enrolled at Mason County Normal School to become qualified for teaching in rural schools. She began her career at age eighteen by teaching four years at the Major one room school, and spent her summers taking courses at Ferris Institute in Big Rapids. She furthered her education at Central Michigan Teachers College and earned her Life Certificate, which qualified her to teach for any school in Michigan. She later finished her Bachelors of Science Degree at Central Michigan University, and earned her Masters of Arts Degree from Western Michigan University, while teaching for the Farwell, Muskegon, Big Rapids, and Ludington schools from 1947 to 1951, and for the Hastings schools for ten years. Leola returned home and taught for the Mason County Central schools, teaching four years at Scottville Elementary, and five years at Riverton Elementary, before concluding her 34 year career with her retirement in 1971. Whether she was teaching in Mason County or away from home, Leola always retained her residence and the family home her parents had built in Riverton Township. During her retirement, Leola continued to be involved with education. She was an active member of the Mason-Lake Chapter of the Michigan Association of Retired School Personnel, a long time member of the Ludington Chapter of the American Association of University Women, and was also a member of the Manistee Chapter of American Association of Retired Persons. While teaching in Hastings, she joined the Michigan Business and Professional Woman's Organization, and also became a member of Delta Kappa Gamma, an honorary association of women educators. She was also an active member of the Christian Women's Club. She was an avid reader and enjoyed fellowship with her many friends. In her youth, Leola attended the former St. Paul Evangelical Church, and later attended the Scottville United Methodist Church, where she has been a member for many years. Following the death of her father in 1955, Leola

assumed the care of her mother until her death in 1971, living in an apartment during the school year, and returning to the family farm for the summer months. Throughout her lifetime, Leola has sensed God's care and protection. At age 25, a serious illness caused her to lose the use of her right arm and leg, but God restored her health, allowing her to resume her teaching career. When asked what she enjoyed the best about teaching, she would respond with "the children." Leola was preceded in death by her parents, her baby sister Beatrice, and her brother-in-law Wendell Young. She will be greatly missed by her sister Eleanor Young of South Scottville Road, her nieces who were very special to her, Beverly (Daniel) Hawkins of Virginia, Doris (Ivan) Coles of Muskegon, and Nancy Letts of Scottville; her grand nieces Sarah Chezick of Atlanta, GA, Rebecca (Kevin) Nulty of Virginia, Rebecca (Gary) Kennedy and their sons Cole and Clay of Muskegon, and Julia (Jordan) Sousa of Bermuda; her grand nephews Jonathan Chezick of East Lansing, and Daniel Letts of Scottville; her cousins Albert (Sue) Septrion, Tony Septrion, and Michelle (Chris) Hanson. Funeral services will be held for Leola at 1:00 PM on Wednesday, May 7 at the Scottville United Methodist Church, with her pastor, the Rev. Robert Jones officiating. Burial will take place next to her parents and sister in Center Riverton Cemetery. Friends may meet with her family for a time of visitation on Tuesday afternoon from 4-7 PM at the Stephens Funeral Home in Scottville. Those who wish may make memorial contributions to the Scottville United Methodist Church.