



Odessa Law

March 28, 1935 - July 11, 2025

On March 28, 1935, Emmett and Ola Lee Cotton gave birth to a baby girl in their home in Memphis, Tennessee. Her birth certificate initially read “Baby Girl Cotton,” a name later legally changed to the one we all came to know and love—Odessa Cotton. The story of how she came into the world named “Baby Girl Cotton” was one she always enjoyed sharing.

Odessa moved to Detroit, Michigan, in 1944 at the age of nine. She accepted Christ at an early age and became a devoted member of Prince of Peace Baptist Church, where she served faithfully as an usher and trustee. In the early 2000s, she became a member of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, where she remained a committed member until her final days.

A proud graduate of Northwestern High School in Detroit, Odessa was recruited by the U.S. Federal Government in 1953—a testament to her exceptional leadership and organizational skills. Throughout her distinguished career, she held a variety of roles, including positions at the Tank Arsenal, in regulatory audit, and within the investigative division of U.S. Customs. She broke barriers as a trailblazer for Black women in the federal government. Odessa retired in July 1997 as the Employee Relations Specialist to the Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Customs Office of Investigations, leaving behind a legacy of excellence, integrity, and dedicated public service.

On March 28, 1953, Odessa married James Irvin Thomas, and from that union came two children: "Andre" (aka Andra) Virginia Thomas and James Irvin Thomas Jr. She later married James Emmett Law on December 10, 1960, who preceded her in death. Together they welcomed three children: Jayna Marie Law, Jerome Emmett Law, and Jeffrey Kahlid Law.

Odessa lived her life with grace, strength, and a signature sense of style. She was the perfect balance of prim and proper, yet never shy about speaking her mind with class and honesty. Known for her impeccable fashion sense, she had a true love for clothes and could often be found out shopping for the latest styles. In her retirement years, she remained full of life and energy—attending and watching basketball games (a shared passion with her brother, Lucius Cotton), taking Zumba, Jazzercise, and line dancing classes, and keeping up with her fitness routine at the gym.

Odessa had a heart for others and a deep, unwavering love for those around her. Selfless by nature, she consistently put others before herself and found joy in caring for those in need. Her nurturing spirit and quiet strength made her a steady source of comfort, support, and encouragement to both family and friends throughout her life. Her nurturing spirit was matched by her natural gift in the kitchen. She expressed her love through the meals and baked goods she prepared with joy, earning her the affectionate nickname "Betty Crocker." Her passion for cooking and baking was lovingly passed down to her granddaughter Brittney, who cherished learning new recipes and baking alongside her. It was no surprise that the family later gave Brittney the nickname "Betty Crocker Jr.," as she proudly continues the tradition.

Being a grandmother and great-grandmother brought Odessa her greatest joy. She was affectionately called "Grandma" or "Gaga" by her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, with whom she shared countless cherished moments. Her grandsons, Jerome and Jayson, especially remember the sweet tradition

of being tucked in at night and saying their prayers with her. She often kept her grandchildren overnight, creating a home filled with love, laughter, and faith. That same joyful spirit continued with her great-granddaughter, who inspired many dance parties and sing-alongs—including Odessa's favorite: “Baby Shark.”

She shared a special bond with her second-born granddaughter, Chelsea, with whom she shared a birthday. Odessa always referred to Chelsea as her greatest birthday present, and the two delighted in celebrating together. Chelsea proudly carries on her grandmother’s bold and fiery spirit.

For a brief time, Odessa experienced health challenges and moved from Detroit to live with her daughter, Andra, in West Bloomfield. True to form, she bounced back with determination—quickly reclaiming the kitchen, handling daily chores, and restoring her signature sass and energy.

That strength remained with her until the very end. Even in her final days, Odessa was a fighter. She faced pain with resilience, courage, and grace—just as she had lived her life.

Odessa was preceded in death by her parents Emmett and Ola Lee Cotton; her loving husband, James Emmett Law; her two beloved brothers, Lucius Cotton and Walter Cotton; and her dear friend, James Bradfield.

Odessa leaves behind many who will continue to carry her memory forward: her beloved children, Andra Virginia Richardson, James Irvin Thomas, Jayna Marie Law, Jerome Emmett (Kim) Law, and Jeffrey Kahlid Law; grandchildren, Brittney Leigh (Antonio) Moore, Chelsea Anne Richardson, Jerome Emmett Louis Law, and Jayson Alexander Law; great-grandchildren, Kynsleigh Virginia Moore and Kallan Antonio Moore; sister-in-law, Delores Sykes Cotton; and countless other members of the Cotton, Law, and Thomas families, along

with a host of extended relatives and dear friends.

Odessa's life was one of faith, strength, elegance, and boundless love. Her legacy lives on in the family she nurtured, the values she instilled, and the lives she touched. She will be deeply missed and forever remembered.

Funeral Service will be live streamed here: <https://hartfordmemorial.thechurchonline.com/>

Cemetery Details

Glen Eden Lutheran Memorial Park

35667 Eight Mile Rd
Livonia, MI 48125

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL **25.** 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Kemp Funeral Home & Cremation Services
24585 Evergreen Rd
Southfield, MI 48075
(248) 702-5367
info@kempfh.com
<https://www.kempfuneralhome.com>

Family Hour

JUL **26.** 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Hartford Memorial Baptist Church
18700 James Couzens Freeway
Detroit, MI 48235

Funeral Service

JUL **26**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Hartford Memorial Baptist Church
18700 James Couzens Freeway
Detroit, MI 48235

Tribute Wall

SL

“ Prayers & condolences to her family & friends. We danced together at William's Rec Center years ago. We would also meet up at Hartford's Wednesday Hour of Power Services.

Sharold Lewis - August 20, 2025 at 03:20 PM

SD

“ Sandra D. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Odessa Law.

Sandra D. - July 31, 2025 at 12:47 AM

PG

“ Penny G. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Odessa Law.

Penny G. - July 26, 2025 at 08:24 AM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Odessa Law.



July 25, 2025 at 02:42 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Odessa Law.

July 25, 2025 at 02:42 PM

EF

“ Eliza Scott & Family purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Odessa Law.



Eliza Scott & Family - July 25, 2025 at 01:28 PM

JV

“ Jonathan, Eydee, and Vanessa purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Odessa Law.



Jonathan, Eydee, and Vanessa - July 25, 2025 at 12:21 PM

JV

“ Jonathan, Eydee, and Vanessa planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Odessa Law.

Jonathan, Eydee, and Vanessa - July 25, 2025 at 12:21 PM

JN

“ Joanne N. purchased the Lavender Reflections Spray for the family of Odessa Law.



Joanne N. - July 25, 2025 at 10:15 AM

NB

“ Nick Berg purchased the Gracious Lavender Basket for the family of Odessa Law.



Nick Berg - July 24, 2025 at 09:15 PM

NB

“ Nick Berg planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Odessa Law.

Nick Berg - July 24, 2025 at 09:15 PM

DE

“ Dear Andra, my heart goes out to you and your family for the loss of your mother. My thoughts and prayers are with your family,
Sincerely, Debbie Chase

Debbie - July 23, 2025 at 08:00 PM

IN

“ Iris N. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Odessa Law.

Iris N. - July 23, 2025 at 11:41 AM

GJ

“ Gary J. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Odessa Law.

Gary J. - July 23, 2025 at 09:47 AM

GC

“ Gene, Diane and Gina Cross planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Odessa Law.

Gene, Diane and Gina Cross - July 22, 2025 at 04:27 PM

GC

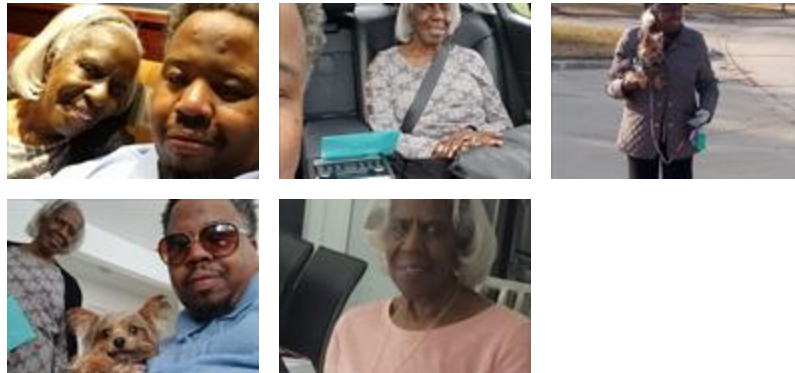
“ Gene, Diane and Gina Cross purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Odessa Law.



Gene, Diane and Gina Cross - July 22, 2025 at 04:27 PM

BR

“ 6 files added to the album Memories



brittneyelle0817 - July 21, 2025 at 12:19 PM

BB

“ Bill, John, and Kim Brown planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Odessa Law.

Bill, John, and Kim Brown - July 19, 2025 at 11:15 AM

BB

“ *Bill, John, and Kim Brown purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Odessa Law.*



Bill, John, and Kim Brown - July 19, 2025 at 11:15 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Odessa Law.*



July 18, 2025 at 09:20 PM

PS

“ *A true lady in every sense of the word. I will remember her fondly.*

Paul Sward - July 18, 2025 at 08:00 PM

BR

“ *20 files added to the album Memories*



brittneyelle0817 - July 17, 2025 at 11:09 PM

NP

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Natalie Lowe Patterson - July 17, 2025 at 05:30 PM

RB

“ Ruby Braich planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Odessa Law.

Ruby Braich - July 17, 2025 at 12:28 PM

RB

“ Ruby Braich purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Odessa Law.



Ruby Braich - July 17, 2025 at 12:28 PM

SF

“ Sharon Metz & Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Odessa Law.

Sharon Metz & Family - July 16, 2025 at 09:20 PM

SF

“ Sharon Metz & Family purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Odessa Law.



Sharon Metz & Family - July 16, 2025 at 09:20 PM

MB

“ Marla Sheffler and Mike Bills purchased the Gracious Lavender Basket for the family of Odessa Law.



Marla Sheffler and Mike Bills - July 16, 2025 at 08:06 PM



“ Sweet Sincerity was purchased for the family of Odessa Law.



July 15, 2025 at 07:42 PM

KA

“ Katerina & Aimee purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Odessa Law.



Katerina & Aimee - July 15, 2025 at 07:36 PM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Odessa Law.



July 15, 2025 at 05:15 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Odessa Law.

July 15, 2025 at 05:15 PM



“ Miguel Mickey and Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Odessa Law.

Miguel Mickey and Family - July 15, 2025 at 02:02 PM



“ Miguel Mickey and Family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Odessa Law.



Miguel Mickey and Family - July 15, 2025 at 02:02 PM



“ The Lebowski Law Firm planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Odessa Law.

The Lebowski Law Firm - July 15, 2025 at 11:56 AM

TF

“ *The Lebowski Law Firm purchased the Your Light Shines for the family of Odessa Law.*



The Lebowski Law Firm - July 15, 2025 at 11:56 AM