



Odessa Mae Langley

May 12, 1946 - September 3, 2026

Huntsville, Alabama

Odessa Mae Langley died in Huntsville on September 3, 2026. She was eighty. Born there on May 12, 1946, she grew up in a house that could hear the test stands on a clear morning and treated that rumble as weather. Her mother packed lunches for the night shift at a cotton mill. Odessa learned that a tray arriving hot is a kind of engineering the brochures never mention.

She spent twenty-six years in an arsenal cafeteria that fed people who argued about trajectories over gravy. She started on the steam table. She ended as the woman who could tell, from the sound of a pan, whether the rice would hold through a late meeting. She kept a second carton of milk for the intern who arrived after the count. She would not let a contractor invent a portion that made the register a liar. On the mornings a launch window slipped she still opened the line, because hunger does not wait on a countdown.

She married Ellis Langley in 1968. He drove a parts truck and died in 2007. They raised a daughter and a son in a brick ranch that needed a new swamp cooler every few summers. After Ellis was gone she kept his saucer on the drainboard for a season, then gave it to a granddaughter who liked cereal at odd hours.

Neighbors remember a woman who froze extra cornbread in coffee cans and left them on porches after a funeral. She disliked a speech, loved a clean steam table, and could tell you which year the cafeteria switched from square pizza to the round kind the engineers would actually finish. She died in Huntsville, under a sky that still tests things. The line still opens. Someone else will count the milk.

Services

A gathering at her church hall in Huntsville. Friends may bring a covered dish. A gift to a school breakfast fund

is welcome.

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