



Helen Sutterfield

June 17, 1926 - February 8, 2018

SUTTONS BAY - Helen Broder Sutterfield lived a life filled with laughter and love of family and friends.

At the time of her passing, Thursday, Feb 8, 2018, she was in the comforting, loving hands of family, the remarkable caregivers at Effie's Place and Heartland Hospice.

Helen was born on June 17, 1926. She grew up as an only child on a fruit farm in Ludington, Michigan where she gained her independent spirit. Determined to break the mold, she challenged the rules and became the first woman to don trousers in school, graduated at age 16 as Valedictorian, and earned a scholarship to Western Michigan University.

Prior to furthering her education, Helen developed a crush on a tall, handsome man, 10 years her senior, Selwyn Sutterfield. He made frequent visits from downstate to visit his sister and her husband who lived on a nearby farm. Their families socialized and attended the same church. Nearing her high school graduation, her mother suggested she find her best dress for a gathering of friends, with knowledge Selwyn would attend. Helen soon left the countryside, headed to WMU and Selwyn enlisted in the US Navy. Prior to "Sel" shipping off on the SS Philadelphia on patrol in the Mediterranean, he made a number of trips to Kalamazoo to woo Helen. They began a correspondence, and with the help of the US Postal Service, her love of writing, and some Channel No. 5 scented paper, it blossomed into a romance.

Selwyn proposed to her on the top deck of the Boblo Boat. With beautifully scented orange blossoms cut from the family garden in her hair and bouquet, they were married in Ludington on June 29, 1946 and thus began a happy marriage of 44 years, raising three children in Dearborn, followed by four grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

After Selwyn passed in 1991, Helen spent her time between Dearborn and their small family cottage enjoying the northern woods of Manistee. Cottage time was filled with

memories of her husband, children and grandchildren surrounded by nature and the simple things in life. Helen moved north to Suttons Bay permanently in 2000, on encouragement from her daughter to be closer to her roots in northern Michigan.

“Miss Helen” loved this community and was known in Suttons Bay for her daily walks through the village, her love of children and her cheerful conversation with everyone she met. She loved her family and valued her friendships. She loved Chinese Checkers, ice cream, sipping tea with friends, digging up wildflowers when no one was looking, pruning, raking, caring for and organizing every inch of her home, inside and out. She had fun doing things most adults don’t find the time to do, and took immense pleasure in any project, friends, family and nature. She took her children sledding, taught her granddaughters to name all the wildflowers in the meadow, and her grandsons how to find Petoskey stones on the shore of Lake Michigan. She always knew how to entertain herself and never understood the words, “I’m bored”.

She was loyal, devoted and unafraid to voice an opinion. She was known for her strongly worded letters to senators and local government on many an injustice and her wall of artwork from children she met and loved. She adored their visits for a board game, a cookie, an interesting story and enjoyed attending their school events.

During her lifetime, she let those she loved, both near and far, know how much she valued them through her beautiful letters. She never missed an opportunity to let her loved ones know just how much they meant to her. She was a precious soul with an elegant touch. Her smile and laughter was constant and comforting until the very end. She will be missed so dearly.

Helen was preceded in death by her parents Lloyd and Vernice Broder and husband Selwyn Sutterfield. She is survived by her children Alan Sutterfield (Jane), Jeanne Spiceland (Dave), and Sharon Sutterfield, grandchildren Aleta Dyling (Al), Sarah Wojtas, Scott Sutterfield, and Benjamin Wojtas (Lei), great-grandchildren Nolan, Annabelle, and Clementine.

A celebration of Helen’s life is planned on March 10th. Please join us at 11:00 a.m. as we walk “Helen’s daily path” from her house, through the village, ending at the V.I. Grill for soup and sandwiches. In lieu of flowers, a memorial may be made to the Village of Suttons Bay – Water Wheel Park Enhancement Project.

Comments



“ Sharon, Jeannie and Alan-what a beautiful tribute to your Mom. I will remember her warm smile, and how she took time with me, making me feel as we did art or cooking at your house. What a beautiful life well lived, and well loved. Jolie



jolie kalman - December 23, 2020 at 07:42 PM



“ Sharon I was so sorry to hear about your mom's passing. She was a special lady and I am so grateful I got to know her. I always felt special when she came in the store to talk and get her caramels!

Linda - February 23, 2018 at 01:05 PM



“ Sharon I was out of town when I heard about your mom's passing. I will never forget when I first met Helen. She came in the store and I told her about the twins my first grandchildren! She never forgot to ask me about them. She was a gracious lady that I am so grateful I got to know. She loved her caramels too!

Linda Steck - February 21, 2018 at 10:01 AM



“ I will miss seeing Helen's infectious smile everyday at work. She always brightened my day and was very sweet.

Jessica Moers - February 20, 2018 at 09:06 AM



“ I am so sorry to hear of Helen's passing. She was always a smiling neighbor as she walked past my home on the way to the post office. It seems this month has been particularly hard on her generation as we have lost 3 fine women in our community.

Our thoughts to Sharon and family

Lois Bahle and Larry Mawby

Lois Bahle - February 16, 2018 at 10:10 AM



“ I first met Helen when I saw a stately woman taking pictures of a vacant lot down the street from me, which was soon to be her home in Suttons Bay. As was always the case with Helen, through conversation we discovered a personal connection. We both had lived in Dearborn and loved the violets that grew on the Henry Ford Estate there. (Unsurprisingly some had found her way to her yard.) That's when I first learned of her love of blue flowers. Through the years I shared plants (all the blue ones) from my garden with her and got many in return. Those flowers will continue to bloom happily in my garden, and in my heart forever.

Helen stepped into the role of being Miss Helen to all the children. Each kid in the neighborhood was gifted with one-on-one time at Miss Helen's. On their day they would leave siblings behind and walk tall down to her house. She was theirs for the afternoon, and they felt special. Soon photos and artwork from those visits proudly filled her wall. These visits were special to me too, my kids' own grandparents lived far away, and she helped fill a void. Helen didn't always wait for the kids to come to her either. She dropped off cards and cookies during her daily walks, never forgetting birthdays or holidays. The plate of Christmas cookies was an annual treat.

I too treasured my one-on-one time and often stopped to visit with Helen as she pulled lawn chairs into the driveway to sit and chat while overlooking her garden.

Helen certainly touched a lot of lives. And her method was simple: She took the time to have a conversation. She took the time to get to know you. She took the time to make you feel special.

Kathy Egan - February 14, 2018 at 04:03 PM



“ Helen Marie was the "girl next door" who married my aunt's little brother and moved to Detroit. She was indeed " a precious soul with an elegant touch." Helen's going to college back in the 1940s made my oldest sister also want to go to college in 1948. The rest of us all followed. Thank you Helen.

The very first memory I have of Helen was being so excited to go to her shivaree (for those who remember shivarees) when I was three years old. When she would come to visit her parents with Uncle Sel and their kids she would always come across the road to visit us too. When she took her kids to the beach she would take me too.

Thank you Helen.

Later in life, when both of our folks were gone, Helen used to come to visit and ask if she could park in our driveway and look at the house she grew up in. She always made the other person feel special. Thank you Helen.

She had a wee bit of naughtiness to her in such an innocent way that made her special. She would choose the homemade peach jam with the brandy in it or ask for a copy of my short story about the three sisters who lived in the woods and were visited by farmers and fishermen. She want to show it to a friend of hers. Thank you Helen.

This past holiday I missed the the annual card with the red cardinal on it and the hand-written note. Yes, Helen, thank you for all those years of red cardinal Christmas cards. You are greatly missed.

Jim Stewart - Ludington, MI.



Jim Stewart - February 14, 2018 at 02:49 PM



“ Photo of Helen Broder, left, and my sisters Lois and Jean, is dated Sep 8, 1937. Jim Stewart

Jim Stewart - February 14, 2018 at 02:59 PM



“ Condolences to the family of Helen Marie Broder Sutterfield. My heart is breaking as is yours. Helen Marie was my father's first cousin, but she was more like a second mother to me rather than a cousin. I will truly miss my once or twice a year visits to her and our "color tour" ride around the peninsula with my sister Donna. I will miss her telling me about my mother and father, and stories about me as a small child. I was four years old and a flower girl in her wedding, and every time we met we laughed about the "flower girl" who forgot to drop the flowers down the aisle. She was a gracious, artful, happy, beautiful woman. No one could be "down" or unhappy around Helen Marie. She lifted your spirits to the heavens. I'm sure she is in the heavens now, reunited with her beloved Sel.

Phyllis Meisenheimer Cox - February 14, 2018 at 10:22 AM



“ Mike Cyplik lit a candle in memory of Helen Sutterfield



Mike Cyplik - February 13, 2018 at 10:55 AM



“ An exceptional lady of dignity and graciousness. Always a pleasure to talk with. She will be missed.
Doug & Dianne Lashbrook

Doug & Dianne Lashbrook - February 12, 2018 at 06:19 PM



“ Helen was a very special person whom I have gotten to know over the last several years. Will miss her great smile and will miss our hugs that we have shared during that time.
Kelly Pobuda

Kelly Pobuda - February 12, 2018 at 09:24 AM



“ Helen was always very delightful to be around. For many years she would come to my booth at the farmers market to get a brownie and Green Tomato Relish. She will be missed and remember as a great lady



Melissa Drake - February 11, 2018 at 10:17 PM



“ All of us at Cherry Beach Orchards send our prayers to Helen's family. She was our dear friend whom we enjoyed all her visits with us. Mark and Karen Drake

Karen Drake - February 11, 2018 at 06:23 PM