



Mary Helen Olson

March 13, 1919 - January 15, 2015

Mary Helen Olson died January 15, 2014

“A tree that looks at God all day/And lifts her leafy arms to pray”-- Joyce Kilmer, “Trees”

TRAVERSE CITY. Mary Helen (Eoff) Olson, 95, a woman widely loved for her selfless, ineffable care, and her kindness and encouragement to family, friends, and community, passed away in her sleep early morning, January 15, 2015. Family members surrounded her for several days before she died, and the night before they sang hymns, old love songs, and carols to her.

Mary Helen was born in Toledo, Ohio on March 13, 1919, to Robert J. and Frances (Peters) Eoff, who were descendants of early settlers in Toledo and nearby Petersburg, Michigan. Her family later moved to Detroit and the farmhouse in South Lyons, where she graduated from high school. She met her life-long love Ken Olson who worked one fortuitous summer at her family’s resort on nearby Whomper’s Lake. They married in 1936 and made a home for their young family in Detroit. In 1946, they moved to Traverse City to start a wholesale merchandise business and raise their five children.

Mary Helen’s joy in life was doing and caring for others. She took care to know, earnestly listen to, and support them in all endeavors, in short making everyone feel special. She cherished her husband, family, friends, and helped the less fortunate, sending meals to sick friends, volunteering as a “pink lady” at the hospital and for Hospice, and helping with the annual Munson Hospital bazaar and memorial garden at the church. She loved homemaking, gardening, music, dancing with her husband Ken at the Slab Town Jazz Society, and reading, and she volunteered at PTA, her children’s musical events, sports, and scouts. After her children were grown she worked for Wilson’s Furniture, helping her customers decorate the interior of their homes. She also worked, as needed, at Bartling’s and kept the books for her husband’s business, and she enjoyed her women’s investment club. As a grandmother and great-grandmother, she was in her glory, making baby blankets, dolls, tutus, costumes, Christmas stockings, and so much more! She was a

wonderful cook and loved baking, especially those 100 gingerbread boys and girls she baked every Christmas for her grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and children in Munson Hospital.

Mary Helen was preceded in death by her husband Ken Olson, her parents, and sisters Nancy (Eoff) White, Patricia (Eoff) Whoeler and brothers Robert J. Eoff, Jr, and Richard Eoff. She is survived by her children and their spouses, Karen (Sam) Mitchell, Ann (Charlie) Littlefield John (Carolyn) Olson, Jim (Judy Bosma) Olson, Eric (Joyce) Olson, fourteen grandchildren, Linda (Larry Sommerville, Sam (Beth) Mitchell, Mike (Karen) Mitchell, Shelly (Dan) Hammer, Kenny Olson, Cal (Marcella) Littlefield, Hallie (Jeff) Wastell, Amy (Thad) Bousamra, Kathryn Olson, Jessica (Eric) Bachmann, Mary (Brian) Macias, Jeffrey Olson, Jim Olson, Jr., Becky Jarratt, step-grandchildren Alison Stow, Lindsey (James) Ross, and Natalie Stow, and twenty great-grandchildren.

She is remembered for her smile, appreciation of stories, humor, notes and cards, and an unstated warmth and reassurance when you were with her. No wonder she wrote in her later years, “[B]e kind with everyone one you meet, in greeting – a ‘hello,’ a hug, or a pat on the back. Be happy with a friend’s success. If someone’s sad, give them cheer, pray for what you are able to do to help, and pray and ask God to keep them.” Whenever we feel happiness deep in our soul, we can treasure the love that she left behind.

A celebration service will be held at the First Congregational Church, Center Road, Traverse City, on Saturday, January 24, at 3 p.m. Reverend Gary Hogue will be officiating. Visitation with family and friends will take place before the service at 2:00 p.m. and following the service in the Fireside Room.

Memorial contributions may be sent to Child and Family Services, Munson Hospice, or the First Congregational Church. Arrangements are by the Reynolds-Jonkhoff Funeral Home in Traverse City. The family wishes to express our gratitude to the staff of Orchard Creek and Hospice for their kind, good care.

Events

JAN **Visitation** 02:00PM - 03:00PM

24

First Congregational Church

6105 Center Road, Traverse City, MI, US, 49686

JAN **Memorial Service** 03:00PM

24

First Congregational Church

6105 Center Road, Traverse City, MI, US, 49686

Comments



“ My thoughts and prayers are with all of the Olson Family. Grandma Mary Helen was such an inspiration to have known. I will always remember the gleam in her eye and her untiring ability to care for everyone. Grandma Mary Helen was truly full of love. She amazed me at how she could take a special interest in so many people and remember many details in their lives. At every gathering I can remember, people always stopped what they were doing to greet Mary Helen when she arrived. Everyone wanted to say hello to her, embrace her with a hugs and kisses, and speak with her. She really was the “angel of love” in the room. As a child, Shelly and I would on occasion stay with Grandma Mary Helen & Grandpa Ken at their condo. Grandma Mary Helen went to great lengths to make sure everything was perfect for us girls. Shelly and I could not help but love every minute with her. Every year I received a Christmas gingerbread cookie from Grandma Mary Helen, I also felt her special love. Mary Helen will be certainly be missed here on earth, but her love of life and love for others will be felt here on earth forever. I take comfort in knowing Grandpa Ken will now have his “Bride” back with him.

Hugs, kisses, and prayers to all in the Olson Family.

Kristi Nelson Taylor
Savannah, Georgia

Kristi Nelson Taylor - January 22, 2015 at 02:35 PM



“ Mary Helen was like a second Mom to me. The Olson home was always a favorite place back in high school. Karen was my best friend and I spent many hours at their home. Mary Helen always had delicious food cooking in the kitchen and their home was filled with music and lots of love. In recent years I have enjoyed visiting her at Orchard Creek, sometimes helping her eat and sometimes looking at pictures and talking of many past memories. I will always remember with love sweet Mary Helen.

Bob and I send our thoughts,prayers and love to all the Olson Family.

Ann & Bob Witkop

Ann & Bob Witkop - January 21, 2015 at 05:48 PM



“ Mary Helen will always be close in our hearts and home as we make one of the recipes she shared or serve something in a dish she gave us as a wedding present decades ago. But those are not the main reasons. Mary Helen was a shining example of living one's faith, always thinking of others and showing she cared through her kind words and actions. Mary Helen's is a life to celebrate for

generations to come. We feel blessed to have known her.
Dave and Kathy Wilson

Kathy Wilson - January 21, 2015 at 10:51 AM



“ Please accept our condolences. I have too many fond memories to list. Just know, Eric, one thing that made being your friend so easy was that Mary Helen always made it comfortable to be in your home. She always had such a warm smile -- except when we did something really dumb, but it wasn't long before the smile returned. In later years at Christmas, our daughters (Krissi and Kelly) loved the gingerbread cookies and then meeting the wonderful lady who baked them. More on baking; I'll never forget the "different" odor coming from her Birchwood kitchen (must have been late 1950's). It was Jim or John who told me it was pizza pie, my first and most memorable pizza (in a good way). Our conversations at Orchard Creek were short and sweet, bringing an end to a long string of really good memories of THE Mrs. Olson.

Mike & Vicki Wildman - January 20, 2015 at 04:18 PM



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Kristi Nelson Taylor
Savannah, Georgia

Kristi Taylor - January 22, 2015 at 12:05 PM



“ Our thoughts and prayers are with all of your family and we are so sorry for your loss. We feel so blessed to have know this wonderful lady. Always enjoyed our visits with her at Orchard Creek and at her and Ken's home. God bless.

Harold and Tana Wilsey

Tana - January 24, 2015 at 08:05 AM



“ Jim, John and Family, I Just received the news of your mothers passing. Please accept Jane's and my sympathy. There are so many fond memories of your Mom and Dad. While growing up the Olsen home was one of at least 5 or 6 homes we all spent many hours at. Your Mom and Dad were both very special, their values and work ethic made a large impression on my life and I continue to live by the example they set, so many years ago. They touched so many lives over the years, making everyone they met better persons. Not only do they live on in so many others; they will continue to be an inspiration through others. As with your Dad, your mother with be greatly missed.

With our deepest sympathy, Jack and Jane

Jack Howard - January 25, 2015 at 12:15 PM