



Helen Lois Swearingen

June 13, 1926 - November 29, 2020

Helen Lois Swearingen (nee King) was born on June 13, 1926, in Louisville, Kentucky to Roberta Marie Fink and James Robert King. She was the oldest of four children and the only female. Brothers Ralph, Robert, and Ray preceded her in death (Ralph died of whooping cough at age 2). Helen was preceded in death by her husband, John Swearingen, and is survived by children Mark Ralph Swearingen, Gary Joseph Swearingen, Bruce Edward Swearingen, Jil Marie Swearingen (Warren Steiner), Teri Ann Knight (Ken Knight) and grandchild Clarke Alexandra Knight. She passed on November 29 of natural causes, in her home, with family by her side.

Helen and John married in 1949. They moved to Colesville, Maryland in 1952 with young son Mark and baby Gary. They lived in a leaky log cabin on Piping Rock Drive and added son Bruce to the family. They returned to Louisville, to the suburb of Fern Creek, where Teri and Jil were born. Helen was the mother of five children within seven years. The family moved to San Jose, California in 1963 and built a house in a neighborhood in Almaden Valley, among rolling hills above a creek. It was a beautiful natural area with clean air and a delightful climate. To help her brother Robert, Helen accepted care of her niece Karen for a year. Treks in the family station wagon included San Francisco, Santa Cruz, Monterey, and many other Pacific Coast locations. A Winnebago was enlisted for a memorable trip to Yosemite. The hippie movement was in full bloom. When John's employment situation changed in 1967, he moved most of the family to Louisiana, then Texas, and finally

Nevada (Las Vegas).

In 1974, John's new job as manager for the U.S. Senate Rules Committee in Washington, D.C. led them to Alexandria, Virginia where they lived for 24 years. Daughter Jil joined them. Helen's longing to return to northern California succeeded in a move back in 1998 where they settled in Napa. They enjoyed exploring the valley, walking on winery roads, trying new restaurants, supporting local artists, and cooking with abundant fresh produce. Helen recently acknowledged that Napa was her favorite place of all. She had cultivated a lovely circle of close friends whom she cherished. After John's passing, she continued to live independently in their home in Napa.

Helen was an attractive but self-effacing, green-eyed, auburn-haired non-conformist. On a weeklong family vacation to Nassau in 1968, she declared that she was on vacation and would not be cooking. She provided cereal, milk, cooked white rice, honey, and instant lemon ice tea, supplemented with food from a local grocery store. Prior to marrying, Helen worked as a secretary in a doctor's office and became proficient in short-hand. She had impressive artistic skills and, late in life, architectural drawing. A self-taught gourmet cook, she mastered difficult recipes and was an excellent baker and candy maker, spoiling her family with home-made breads, cakes, pies, kuchen, eclairs, Napoleons, Springerle cookies for Christmas, caramels, fudge, Divinity, and taffy. Helen loved to swim and ensured that her kids could swim from an early age. She lived a healthy lifestyle, exercising daily. Helen had an inquisitive mind, a complex wit and peculiar sense of humor. She became consumed with politics in her later years. Horrified by the 2016 election of a president who represented the antithesis of her beliefs and values, she vowed to live long enough to return a Democrat to the White House.

A private memorial tribute for Helen will be held in the future.

Helen cared greatly about California's environment and native landscapes.

Gifts in her honor can be made to the California Native Plant Society <https://www.cnps.org/give/tribute>

Tribute Wall



“ *Helen Lois Swearingen*

September 29, 2022 at 04:54 PM



“ *Helen Lois Swearingen*

September 29, 2022 at 02:55 PM

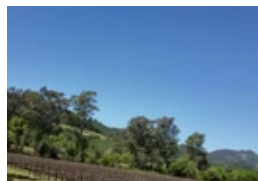


“ *Our family had the good fortune in 2013 to move next door to Helen. We enjoyed seven years living in close proximity to her home and cherished her welcoming smile, words of wisdom, and political observations. It fills us with sadness to be without her physical presence, but we will always feel her closeness when flowers bloom and the hummingbirds entertain us in the backyard. Always at the right moment, her memory will lift us up and we will feel her spirit again and again. Love, David, Mary, and Greta*

M.P. Margulies - December 31, 2020 at 01:35 PM



“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



Jil Marie Swearingen - December 30, 2020 at 06:21 PM



A Peaceful and beautiful walk

Nancy Rybicki - January 01, 2021 at 03:57 PM



“ 2 files added to the album *Memories Album*



Claffey and Rota Funeral Home - December 28, 2020 at 12:50 PM