



## HELEN MARIE GRAF

October 12, 1923 - December 28, 2020

Helen Marie Graf,  
October 12, 1923-December 28, 2020

“When I die, I am going to heaven, and I am going to have a great big party,” Helen Marie Graf would often tell her children. On the morning of December 28, 2020, she passed over to begin her party plans.

She had lived a life of 97 years that began on October 12, 1923, in Stephen, Minnesota, when she joined this world as the eldest child of Milne (“Mel”) and Celine Robertson. She grew up in Argyle, Minnesota, where she graduated with honors from Argyle High School in 1941. Already expressing a deep appreciation for education, she enrolled at St. Teresa College in Winona, Minn., where she majored in chemistry and mathematics.

It was while attending college that she went on a blind date with a soldier who was on leave. She maintained a correspondence with him and after she graduated and the war ended, she married that soldier, John Milton Graf, in a private ceremony in Torrance, Calif., in 1946. After first making their home in Caledonia, the newlyweds purchased a grocery store in Lime Springs, Iowa, in 1949. There, Helen embarked on her teaching career while Milt managed the store. They also began their family that would eventually grow to five children: Tom, Celine, Joe, and Jim, all born in Cresco, Iowa, and John, who was born in Caledonia, soon after the family moved back to Milt’s boyhood home.

In Caledonia, Milton purchased Henry Blehrud's grocery store on Main Street, and Helen secured a teaching position with the Caledonia Public School system. For the next 25 or so years, Helen taught Mathematics to the community's children. At one point, one of her children "did the math" to estimate she had taught more than 4,000 kids during her tenure.

Coincidentally, that same child estimated that Helen had cooked about the same number of chickens for Sunday dinners.

Helen was homemaker, a mother, and a teacher. Only her faith superseded her worldly commitments. As a devoted member of St. John's and, later, St. Mary's Catholic Parish, she was active in Catholic Daughters and the Rosary Guild. In retirement, she continued to tutor students, engaged with the Caledonia Study Club, made rosaries, and tended to her husband who had been disabled by a heart attack in 1976. Their life together ended after 69 years, when Milt passed away in 2015.

For the last few years, she has resided at Claddagh Senior Living, where she still enjoyed playing cards, eating chocolates, and visiting with family and friends.

Helen is survived by her five children Tom (Lisa), Celine (Alan), Joe (Carla), Jim (Joan), and John (Diane); seven grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; her sister, Margaret Hunt; and sisters-in-law, Arlene Robertson, Mary Robertson, and Martha Robertson. Her party in heaven will be attended by so many loved ones who preceded her including her husband, Milton; her parents, Mel and Celine Robertson; and her brothers Bill, Jim, Denny, Joseph "Ed," Ken, and Keith.

Out of concern for everyone's health and safety during this tragic period of Coronavirus, a small, private family ceremony will be held prior to interment at Calvary Cemetery. If anyone would like to commemorate Helen's lifetime of teaching and community service, the family asks that it be done in the form of donations to St. Mary's Catholic School, 308 E South St, Caledonia, MN 55921 or to EWTN, 5817 Old Leeds Road, Irondale, AL 35210.



# Tribute Wall

AH

“ Please accept my condolences on the passing of your mother. I remember your mother from modular math days in 7th and 8th grade, days when I visited your home in Caledonia with Jim, and times I would chat with her when I visited my mother at the Caledonia care center. She was always ready with a quick quip.

*Allen Heimerdinger*

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**Allen Heimerdinger** - January 10, 2021 at 07:49 PM

VP

“ You all have my sympathy on the passing of a great teacher, neighbor and friend. Apparently I am not the only one remembering playing cards or Trivial Pursuit with Helen & Milt. I guess since she was 97 it is not surprising that that was a LONG time ago. The party in heaven probably has better games, though! Vicki Palen

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**Victoria Palen** - January 10, 2021 at 09:23 AM

JM

“ My deepest sympathy to the Graf family on the passing of your matriarch. I first met Mrs. Graf as the mother of my elementary school pal Joe. The piñata we made for our 5th grade class was generously filled with candy from the Graf's grocery store. Mrs. Graf was also my 9th grade algebra teacher. I particularly remember how patient and caring she was with students who struggled with math.

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**Jim Manhart** - January 07, 2021 at 09:51 PM

DR

“ My condolences to the Graf family. Helen and Milt were wonderful Aunt and Uncle to me and my brother. I remember playing many games of cards with them over the years and they will both be greatly missed.

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**Dennis Robertson** - January 03, 2021 at 09:17 AM

MA

“ My condolences to your family. My husband, Everett Austin, had great respect for Helen & her devotion to her students & her profession. God Bless her memory.

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**Marilyn Austin** - December 31, 2020 at 01:37 PM

BN

“ John and Mrs Graf's family-

*Our deepest sympathies go to you as you bid farewell to your mom. Thanks for sharing her with all of us. Hoping the party 'upstairs' includes all those who have gone before. Don and Barb Lager*

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**barb nuckles** - December 31, 2020 at 11:47 AM

CQ

“ My favorite Math teacher. I remember writing a paper about geometric designs seen in nature and she made favorable comments.

*She always loved to learn .*

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**Connie Gerdes Quan** - December 31, 2020 at 12:26 AM

BL

“ Graf family,  
I have fond memories of Helen as a teacher &  
remember going to their home several times!  
She was a good friend of the Olinger family.  
Such a lovely, cheerful & intellectual lady!  
May Helen enjoy her heavenly home with family & friends! Sending  
loving thoughts & prayers to the family!



*Bob & Pat Lemke*

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**Bob/Pat Lemke** - December 30, 2020 at 09:21 PM

MP

“ She was a wonderful grandma!! Made me laugh, smile and taught  
me valuable life moments.

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**Mary Pearson** - December 30, 2020 at 04:03 PM

HR

“ My deepest sympathy to the family.  
Helen (Waldron) Rusert

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**Helen Rusert** - December 30, 2020 at 03:24 PM

AL

“ Helen Graf was a wonderful mother-in-law. My favorite memories  
were playing Las Vegas Rummy with her and milt and my wife  
Celine. Working in their garden. Helen and Molt were the best  
grandparents for our children many laughs.

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**Alan Lauermann** - December 30, 2020 at 02:06 PM

RS

“ So so sorry for you loss Helen was one special woman loved her cute remarks she would make when she would come into to the grocery store hugs and prayers for all of the family god bless

Ruth Ann StMary - December 30, 2020 at 11:18 AM

JM

“ Mrs. Graf was one of my favorite teachers. Loved math the years she was my teacher. Sending sympathy to all the family. Celine was a classmate of mine. Sincerely, Joan (Holzwarth) Mitchell

Joan Mitchell - December 30, 2020 at 11:14 AM

JK

“ Graf Family: Celine & I were good friends, and also in the same neighborhood, so when I visited, Helen was always busy, but took a little time to have "girl time" with us. I enjoyed the day that she made a peach pie. I'm sure her heavenly party will be most enjoyable. Maybe she will include my mom who passed away on Dec. 6, 2020. These moms worked hard, so now God is giving them rest & fun. May your memories give you strength. Sincerely in prayer. Jane Koel-Schein

Jane M Koel-Schein - December 30, 2020 at 10:47 AM

CB

“ What a lovely lady. I knew her from my banking days.

char y blagsvedt - December 30, 2020 at 10:36 AM

CL

“ *Christine Lampert lit a candle in memory of  
HELEN MARIE GRAF*



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**Christine Lampert** - December 30, 2020 at 10:32 AM

CL

“ *Hello Graf Families,  
I worked at Buckley when Helen was there. Such a Sweet Lady. One  
of My Fondest Memories of Helen was every time I went to her  
room to do meds or clean she always had Candy there to Share. Her  
daughter Celine was in my Husband Howards Class. She often  
talked about her. Also had nice visits with her Sons when they came  
to see her.. She will be missed.*

*Christine Lampert*

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**Christine Lampert** - December 30, 2020 at 10:31 AM

LR

“ *Doug and I would like to extend our sincere condolences to Helen's  
family. Grafts were neighbors to the Kerrigan family for years. I was  
on staff with Helen at the Caledonia Public School. More recently  
we enjoyed visiting with Helen and John at Elsie's when they were  
able to venture out. She always had a huge and welcoming smile  
when we greeted both of them. She will be well remembered for her  
skill as a math teacher and life well lived. Blessings to the family.*

*Laurel Kerrigan Rusert*

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**Laurel Rusert** - December 30, 2020 at 09:52 AM

JA

*Thank you, Mrs. Rusert...the history stretches so far back, but the days of the "old neighborhood" are the fondest in my memory. Beryl and Mrs. Kerrigan were always so nice to the "goofy little kids" in the neighborhood and always had cookies to offer. I miss them all, but I do carry the memories in my heart. And you will ALWAYS be my favorite teacher!! Thanks for nourishing my curious little mind in Kindergarten....John*

John Adams-Graf - December 30, 2020 at 01:53 PM



*It was my pleasure to have taken care of Helen at CSL. Heaven has gained another angel. She will be missed.*

Barb Peters - December 30, 2020 at 09:13 PM

GT

“*Hi to the Graf family I still remember the old saying from Helen DON'T GET OLD. Just have to share a good story about Milton and Helen as he was watching the old westerns at 11 in the morning perfectly contented and so Helen I need to crawl back of the TV and adjust the wires and so you know what happened off goes the Tv and Milt said what the HELL did you do that for?? Was he upset and so Helen made a V line for the kitchen so all was well and he very sweetly asked me to fix the Tv wires. Also they were great promoters of the faith and they suggested we do rosaries and now we have 25,000 cord rosaries all over the world. George has their name on a Mass at The Fatima Center for several years every day and also for your Family. Going to miss Helen!!!! Gail and George*

Gail Teff - December 30, 2020 at 08:39 AM