



Helen Regina Monthei

November 17, 1916 - March 8, 2013

Helen Regina (Sousa) Monthei was known as “Elena” by her parents, “Sis” or “H” by her siblings, “Mother,” “Mom,” or “Hrm” by her children, and “Grandmother” or “GaGa” by her grandchildren and great grandchildren. Helen was the fifth of what were to be eleven children born to her parents, John and Mary Sousa, both Portuguese immigrants from the island of St. George in the Azores. Born in Bakersfield, she was three when the family moved to Vallejo, where she lived for the rest of her long, fruitful life, passing away peacefully at the age of 96.

Helen attended St. Vincent Ferrer grammar and high schools, graduating with the Class of 1935. A single mother most of her adult life, she put her five children through St. Vincent’s grammar and high schools as well as through college, including Notre Dame, St. Mary’s, and USF. She also somehow managed to regularly provide bag lunches and balanced dinners, starched school shirts and homemade Halloween costumes, birthday parties for the whole class, and carefree summer trips. She worked continuously until retiring at the age of 85, as a clerk at Rough Rider in Napa during the War, a legal secretary at the Vallejo office of Millard Smith, a secretary at the Vallejo City Unified School District, and finally part-owner, with her sons, of The Remark Restaurant in Vacaville and Remark’s Harbor House in Vallejo.

After her children were grown, Helen became an avid traveler, seeing the

world from Akashi to Athens, London to Lisbon, Moscow to Marsala, Paris to Prague, and, with each trip, adding to her collections of antique furniture and dolls. But she also loved coming home and resuming her baking duties, providing her unrivaled chocolate chip cookies to any and all visitors. Every Easter, she mass-produced individual loaves of Portuguese sweet bread, one for each of her 50+ family members; and every Christmas Eve, she played hostess to her entire extended family and their ever-changing friends, lavishing all with her famous red and green sandwiches, festive cookies, and hand-chosen gifts. In quiet moments she loved to read or work crossword puzzles. Certainly however, her greatest joy was in spending time with her family, an extensive network branching out in many unique directions, a legacy of which she was rightly proud. Her family will, in turn, forever cherish and exemplify the lessons she taught: to live life with exuberance, to be honest rather than hypocritical, to accept without judging, and all while speaking and writing correctly and dressing and acting respectfully.

Besides her beloved parents, Helen was preceded in death by granddaughters Christina Kramer and Lauren Curtola, brothers Joseph, Thomas, Edward, Albert, George, and Eugene Sousa, and sisters Alice Bunnell and Emma Steinmetz. She is survived by her children Linzie (Rhonda) Kramer, Jolyn (Terry) Curtola, Michael (Patty) Kramer, Frederic (Rhonda) Warnshuis, and Christopher (Lesley) Warnshuis; 13 grandchildren; 22 great grandchildren; brother Ernest Sousa and sister Carmel (Rudy) Tapiro; and numerous nieces and nephews. The family would like to thank Carissa Jacoby for her patient and dependable caregiving and the Kaiser Vallejo Hospice staff for their recent gentle guidance.

Visitation will begin at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 13, with vigil services at 7 p.m., at Twin Chapels Mortuary, 1100 Tennessee St., Vallejo, 707-552-6696. A funeral Mass officiated by long-time family friend Fr. Martin de Porres Walsh, O.P. will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 14, at St. Vincent Ferrer Church, 925 Sacramento St., Vallejo. Inurnment will be private.

Memorial contributions are suggested for Dominican Mission Foundation, P.O.
Box 15367, San Francisco, CA 94115.

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 13. 4:00 PM - 9:00 PM (PT)

Twin Chapels Mortuary
1100 Tennessee Street
Vallejo, CA 94590
(707) 552-6696
twinchapels@aol.com

Service

MAR 13. 7:00 PM (PT)

Twin Chapels Mortuary
1100 Tennessee Street
Vallejo, CA 94590
(707) 552-6696
twinchapels@aol.com

Service

MAR 14. 1:00 PM (PT)

St. Vincent's Catholic Church
925 Sacramento Street
Vallejo, CA 94590

Tribute Wall



“ *Secret Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Helen Regina Monthei.* ”



March 13, 2013 at 01:30 PM