

In Memory of Helen Sanders



By Dale A. Robbins

On Sunday, July 13, 2003, I was stunned to learn of the sudden passing of my sister, Helen Sanders, of New Port Richey, Florida. At the time of her death, she was visiting with her son and daughter-in-law, Mark and Carmen Sanders, in Lebanon, Indiana. Her unexpected death was made even more of a surprise, due to the recent passing of our older brother, Myron Robbins Jr, just seven weeks earlier.

Helen Irene Sanders was born to Myron and Irene Robbins, in Sheridan, Indiana, on October 11, 1937. She graduated from Sheridan High School in 1955, and married Gerald Sanders in 1957, with whom she was married 43 years, until his passing in 2000.

Helen is survived by her three boys and their families... Mark Sanders and his wife, Carmen, of Lebanon, Indiana... Tom Sanders and his wife, Rene', of Bayonet Point, Florida... and Brian Sanders and his wife, Christine, of New Port Richey, Florida. Together, they gave Helen eight grandchildren. Helen also left three surviving siblings, Joan Heine and Barbara Hiatt, both of Lebanon... and myself, Dale

Robbins, of California, along with our father, Myron Robbins Sr of Westfield, Indiana, and stepmother, Mary Elizabeth Robbins, also of Westfield (who, incidentally, also passed away on August 10th). Our mother, Irene, died in 1977.

Helen was a homemaker, enjoyed her family, and liked sewing, doing craft projects and cross stitching. In recent years, she found enjoyment writing and sending emails to her family and friends. She also was a vibrant Christian with a sincere love for the Lord that had grown more intense in recent years. She was a member of the West People's Baptist Church of West Pasco, Florida.

Helen was the oldest of my three sisters, and for many years lived in Lebanon with her Husband Gerald, until moving to Florida approximately 20 years ago. My earliest memories of my sister are few, since she married and left home when I was only 4 years old... but I do have treasured recollections from when I was small... such as when I couldn't pronounce her name "Helen," so I called her "Ollie" instead. I also remember times when we played together, and crying when Ollie got married and left home. I still vividly remember her wedding to Gerald at the Sheridan Church of God in 1957, and can recall how beautiful she was in her wedding dress.

Much clearer are my memories of Helen, Gerald and their boys during my later childhood years, who frequently came to visit mom and dad on Sundays. Helen and Gerald were always so faithful to come visit my parents... wonderful traits that I'll always remember about both my sister and older brother, Myron Jr. Helen was 15 years older than me, but her firstborn son Mark, was much nearer my age, and both he and his younger brother Tom, served as great playmates as I grew up. (Brian came along a little later, after I was nearly an adult.)

Although I had not been able to see my sister in recent times, due to the distance between us, the funeral of our brother seven weeks earlier, enabled us to come together and visit extensively for the first time in many years. I was also blessed that my wife, Jerri, and daughter, Angie, were also able to be there to visit with Helen... unaware that this



would be the last time we would ever have a chance. To the right is a snapshot of my daughter, Angie, giving Aunt Helen a hug, during our visit to attend Myron Jr's funeral. We never dreamed that it would be our final time together.

During the last several months and weeks before her death, Helen wrote me several messages that expressed her strong faith in God... along with some thoughts that seemed nearly prophetic. During the aftermath of our brother's death, unaware that her own passing was just days ahead, she shared, *"In life you never know when God will call us home and it was Jr.'s turn."*

Finally, as I went back and reviewed Helen's email messages to me in previous months, I came across an inspiring writing she had sent me, one that now seems so fitting as a final tribute to her life, as well as a pearl of wisdom for everyday living. This apparently touched her heart, and she wanted to share it with all those she loved. May it speak to you, as much as it did to mine.

--Dale A. Robbins
August 2003

(SENT TO DALE FROM HELEN)

"This is a wonderful message.... you may have seen this before, but I thought it was worth reading again....And to also send it to ones that I love."
Love,

Helen

TAKE HOLD OF EVERY MOMENT

A friend of mine opened his wife's underwear drawer and picked up a silk paper wrapped package: "This, - he said - isn't any ordinary package." He unwrapped the box and stared at both the silk paper and the box. "She got this the first time we went to New York, 8 or 9 years ago. She has never put it on. Was saving it for a special occasion. Well, I guess this is it." He got near the bed and placed the gift box next to the other clothing he was taking to the funeral home, his wife had just passed away.

He turned to me and said: "Never save something for a special occasion. Every day in your life is a special occasion".

I still think those words changed my life.

Now I read more and clean less.

I sit on the porch without worrying about anything.

I spend more time with my family, and less at work.

I understood that life should be a source of experience to be lived up to, not survived through. I no longer keep anything. I use crystal glasses every day. I'll wear new clothes to go to the supermarket, if I feel like it.

I don't save my special perfume for special occasions, I use it whenever I want to. The words "Someday..." and "One Day..." are fading away from my dictionary. If it's worth seeing, listening or doing, I want to see, listen or do it now. I don't know what my friend's wife would have done if she knew she wouldn't be there the next morning, this nobody can tell. I think she might have called her relatives and closest friends.

She might call old friends to make peace over past quarrels. I'd like to think she would go out for Chinese, her favorite food. It's these small things that I would regret not doing, if I knew my time had come.

I would regret it, because I would no longer see the friends I would meet, letters... letters that I wanted to write "One of this days".

I would regret and feel sad, because I didn't say to my sisters, brothers and sons, not enough times, how much I love them.

Now, I try not to delay, postpone or keep anything that could bring laughter and joy into our lives. And, on each morning, I say to myself that this could be a special day. Each day, each hour, each minute, is special.

If you received this, it's because someone cares for you and I know there are ones you care for too. If you get too busy to send this out to other people and you say to yourself that you will send it "One of these days", remember that "One day" is far away... or that day may never come...

| Myron Robbins, Jr | Mary Elizabeth Robbins |