

HELEN MARIE LAKLY FURJANIC SCHLABACH

May 24, 1932 - March 21, 2024



Helen passed away peacefully at Avista Sun City West Memory Care, where she had been receiving loving care for the last two years of her life, with husband Lee at her side.

She grew up in Forest Hills, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Pittsburgh. After graduating from Wilkesburg High School in 1950, she married John George Furjanic Sr., becoming a homemaker while raising their three children: John

George Furjanic Jr., Deborah Marie Petrina, and Suzanne Kimberly Furjanic. They participated in and supported the Croatian Fraternal Union in Rankin, Pennsylvania and were charter members and supporters of the Rankin Junior Tamburitza group, involving their children in the folk music and dance of their cultural heritage. Their children grew and started families of their own, giving Helen 5 grandchildren and four great grandchildren. She is survived by her brothers George Matthew Lakly of Monroeville, PA and Timothy Raymond Lakly of St. Petersburg, FL. She was preceded in death by her sisters, Caroline Barbara Kuchar of Pittsburgh, PA, Mary Jane Green of Phoenix, AZ; and her brother Daniel Joseph Lakly of Peachtree City, GA.

Helen had a very active and loving life. Leading by example, she raised her children to be independent, and to take care of themselves and their families. Along with being a homemaker, she provided accounting services for small businesses, and in the mid 1960's she entered the Mrs. Pennsylvania contest and won the runner-up position. In 1972, husband John suffered a fatal heart attack, leaving Helen a widow. With her two oldest children in college, she committed to raising her youngest daughter Suzanne through high school before finding another partner. In 1981, she married Leland "Lee" A. Schlabach who had three children, Leon Arthur Schlabach of Sun City West, AZ, Lou Ann Wilson of Niceville, FL, and Larry Andrew Schlabach of Mary Esther, FL. Together, their blended families include nine grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, and two great-great grandchildren.

Helen and Lee would go on to enjoy over 42 years of marriage together, where they traveled extensively around the world, including annual vacations to Cancun, Mexico, and six ocean cruises to the Caribbean, Alaska, and Europe. When they weren't traveling, they were actively involved in local Sun City West organizations such as the Ski Club, the Pennsylvania Club, the Engineers Club, the Elks, and the American Legion. Helen and Lee were fervent pinochle partners and enjoyed many hours over the years with their loved ones around the card table. In the last few years they also enjoyed playing Bingo at two local Parlors weekly and occasionally won almost breaking even over time. However, their main activities were golfing in two leagues for Lee and bowling in two leagues for Helen.

Helen was the matriarch central to the Lakly, Furjanic and Schlabach families but also to many dear friends, and will be remembered primarily for the way she opened her heart and home to all, well beyond immediate family. Her love, warmth and wisdom touched many, and made lasting impacts to all our lives. The sound of her name will always bring fullness to our hearts. We are sad to say goodbye to Helen, but will find solace in the wonderful memories she left us with, and knowing that the world is a better place because of all she brought to it.

Anyone wishing to make a donation in Helen's memory can send contributions to the Salvation Army North West Valley Corps, 17420 Avenue of the Arts, Surprise, AZ, 85378.

A Celebration of Helen's Life will be planned to occur in Fall/Winter 2024

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