



Helen Christakos

Holiday Shores | Saturday, November 17 2012

Kind to everyone around her and brave enough to jump off a cliff into Bull Shoals Lake when she was 85, our Mom, Helen Christakos, lived life to the fullest. She was 92 years old when she died on November 17, 2012, in Bethalto, Illinois, after an Olympian struggle with Alzheimer's disease that left her bereft of her memories. But her three daughters, Eugenia Theodora, Angela and Kathryn Irene, and three sons, Gregory, James Chris and Nicholas, won't ever forget her legacy to us.

She was born in Centralia, Illinois, on March 25, 1920, to Greek immigrants, Christ and Panayota Malios Demetrulias. The second of six children, Helen grew up in E. St. Louis and graduated from Dupu High School. She married our dad, Charles Christakos, on June 15, 1942. They settled into a yellow brick house on a street in Cahokia, Illinois. Mom's five siblings, Nick, Fofo, Kles, Cleo and George, with wives and children, lived on the same street.

Mom's parents, our Yiayia and Papou, lived and operated a tavern at the end of the block and other relatives owned the restaurant and dry cleaners next door. "Greek Street," as some called it, was a childhood paradise. We were free to roam up and down the street with our 40-some cousins and second cousins and enter the unlocked doors of our aunts and uncles.

Mom, with her sister, Fofo, hauled the six of us, along with Fofo's eight children, on outings all over the St. Louis area, in a rattling station wagon unequipped with seat belts. Mom and Dad, who was 93 when he died one year ago, were founding members of the St. Constantine and Helen Greek Orthodox Church, now located in Swansea, Illinois. We were Americans, but we were also lucky to have the foundation, security and stability of our Greek traditions.

In addition to her children and their spouses, Deborah Christakos, David Duffey and Mark Janes, Helen is survived by beloved granddaughters Renee, Ellen, Polly, Vanessa,

Rebecca, Erin, Kelli, Jackie and Jessica, grandsons Jimmy, Andy and Mark Jr., and great-grandchildren Jason, Tristen, Summer, Daeja, Collin, Drew and Ariadne. She was preceded in death by son-in-law David Hicks, brother Nick Demetrulias, sister-in-law Mary Demetrulias and brother-in-law Floyd Armstrong. Her large extended family on both the Christakos and Demetrulias sides—including her nephews and nieces—were also dear to her.

This poem by son Nick reflects their long lives and 70-year marriage:

Making the most of each day

Is the true godly way.

Everyone come and join me.

Let's all live for today.

In celebration of her life, visitation will be from 4pm to 8pm on Tuesday, November 20, 2012, at Pitchford Funeral Home. Funeral services will be held at 10am on Wednesday, November 21, 2012, at the funeral home. Burial will follow at St. James Cemetery in Edwardsville.

In lieu of flowers, memorials are suggested to the Alzheimer's Association and will be accepted at the funeral home.

Online guestbook available at www.pitchfordfuneralhome.com.