

Helen Hendrie (1915 - 2017) ^{WD} W'38



January 17, 1915 - November 9, 2017

Our beautiful and amazing mother, Helen Marie Pennywitt Hendrie, passed away peacefully at the Solheim Lutheran Home in Eagle Rock, California the night of November 9, 2017 at the ripe old age of 102. She was born on January 17, 1915, and raised in the quintessential small town of Delta, Ohio along the banks of the Ohio River.

Helen Marie was dearly loved by her family, friends and her wonderful parents, Edgar "Fulton" Pennywitt (a merchant with a myriad of skills) and Mable Saxton Pennywitt (a fabulous homemaker). As an only child, Helen Marie quickly became self-reliant and at a young age helped Fulton run the Saxton Hardware store. When Helen Marie was 15, Mable developed a debilitating form of MS and required constant caregiving from both Helen Marie and Fulton.

After Mable passed, Helen Marie obtained a Bachelor's degree from Ohio Wesleyan University where she joined her beloved Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority. Interested in fashion design, Helen Marie followed her dream after college by working at Marshall-Fields in Chicago, and continued her fashion career in New York by becoming a buyer for Lord & Taylor.

It was in Cleveland that Helen Marie met her future husband, Donald Franz Hendrie, through a family connection. They fell deeply in love and were married in 1939. "Big Don," as his friends would call him, joined the Navy as an officer in 1940 and was soon deployed in the Pacific. On May 28, 1942, their first son, Donald Franz Hendrie Jr. was born in Plainfield, New Jersey; followed in short order by their second son, Christopher Pennywitt Hendrie on August 29, 1943; and a daughter, Diane Hendrie on December 26, 1944.

After Big Don returned from serving honorably in the Navy, Tom Slick, his best friend from Exeter and Yale, persuaded the Hendrie family to move to San Antonio, Texas to manage the Essar Ranch, and as fate would have it many other ranches in Texas and throughout the world.

The family moved to Jackson, Mississippi for a short stint, where Big Don managed the Fidler Ranch for Slick, and a third son, Alexander Gibson Hendrie, was born on October 20, 1954. The family ultimately moved back to San Antonio in 1957 for Big Don to manage the Essar Ranch for Slick.

It was here Helen Marie thrived as a pioneer in the growth of San Antonio and as a prominent and powerful social maven. She encouraged her children to develop their talents and become creative artists, as she was doing. Don Jr. became a novelist and professor of creative writing; Chris, an actor and audiobook artist; Diane, a painter and stained-glass artist; and Alex, a screenwriter and lawyer. Helen Marie joined the Junior League of San Antonio and became a travel agent at the Fuller Travel Agency, planning and hosting world-wide tours. She became a realtor and dabbled in real estate in Alamo Heights. In the 1970s, she fell in love with San Miguel de Allende, Mexico where she spent considerable time in her vacation home with many family and friends. She was one of the first members of the The Argyle Club, The Club Giraud and The San Antonio Country Club. Helen Marie was most proud of her work as a founder and developer of the renowned Southwest Craft Center, now know as the Southwest School of Art.

Big Don pre-deceased Helen Marie in 1995, but she is survived by her sons: Christopher Pennywitt Hendrie (and spouse Stephanie Widener Hendrie) and Alexander Gibson Hendrie (and spouse Caerthan Mary Banks). Her son, Donald Franz Hendrie Jr., and daughter, Diane Hendrie Negrete, both pre-deceased her as well.

She is also survived by 9 beloved grandchildren and 2 great grandchildren. Don Jr.'s two sons (with mother Susan), Nathan Zed Hendrie (and spouse Tamar and great granddaughter Julia) and Arden Roessler Hendrie. Christopher's son, Scott Christopher Hendrie (with mother Kathy); and two daughters, Alyssa Belle Hendrie and Tessa Marie Hendrie (with mother Stephanie). Diane's son, John London Harlow (and great grandson, Dylan); and her three sons, Adan Negrete, Damion Negrete (pre-deceased) and Alejandro Negrete (with father Napoleon). Alex's son, Bedelu Banks Hendrie (with mother Caerthan) make the list complete.

Please join our family with your good thoughts and prayers for sending Helen Marie off to a better and more peaceful place.

She is now in the fine company of Big Don, Don Jr., Diane and little Damion, and all the other family and friends that have passed before us and joined her in that very good place.