



Helen Varian Davis

MAY 6, 1936 - NOV 24, 2023



Scan to Visit

Table of Contents

Obituary	Page 3
Tribute Wall	Page 6
Media	Page 7



Helen Varian Davis

MAY 6, 1936 - NOV 24, 2023

With profound sadness, we announce the passing of Helen Varian Davis who departed this world peacefully after a full and active life of 87 years. She leaves behind a legacy of strength, love, and devotion to family and friends.

Helen was married for 59 years to her doting husband, Bernard (Bernie) Eric Davis. She was staunchly proud of her two children, Eric Davis and Ann Marie Davis; their spouses Kim (née Guffey) Davis and Scott Carolan; and four grandchildren, Jackson (Jack) and Alexandra (Allie) Davis, and Vincent Julian (VJ) and Hiro Carolan. The eldest of five siblings, she is survived by her sister Teri Cornelius of Davis, CA, and brother Arthur James (Jim) Varian of Yountville, CA. She is preceded in death by her parents, Maria (Nina) and Arthur Varian, and brothers Manuel and Morris.

A citizen of the world, Helen had a profound sense of adventure and optimism. She was born in Cebu, Philippines, lived on the run from the Japanese with her family during World War II, and eventually immigrated to San Francisco at the age of 9. They came for free on a troop ship because her father was a U.S. citizen. A born storyteller, she often shared poignant memories such as the time she was separated from her parents as a child during the war—to be fortunately reunited with them a few days later. One of her first memories in the US was a new pair of shoes from the Red Cross. With only a few possessions to their names, her parents became homeowners within several years, and Helen and her siblings grew up in San Francisco as Americans. Numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins followed her family to the US, and Helen spent cherished moments visiting and spending time with extended family in northern and southern California.

Helen went to college and became an elementary school teacher, earning a BA and later an MA from Oregon State (OSU). She met Bernie in 1960, after they both had graduated, at the Ali Baba Ball Room in Oakland, CA where big bands played in the 50s and 60s. Though they had been students at the same time with mutual friends at OSU, they never met until that evening at the dance hall. After being dear friends for four years, they married on June 14, 1964 in Portland, OR.



Obituary

Helen Varian Davis

MAY 6, 1936 - NOV 24, 2023

Helen was a grade school teacher in Portland, and her class of first graders attended the wedding. In 1970, after Bernie finished his PhD at OSU, the family moved from Oregon to Lynchburg, VA where they raised a family and made their home for the next 49 years before moving to Ohio.

Helen taught school for approximately 30 years, spending most of her career teaching in the Lynchburg City Public Schools. She loved it, and she loved the kids, especially students with learning challenges. Before moving to Virginia, she taught grade school in Corvallis (1 year), and Albany, OR (5 years). Her first year teaching in Lynchburg coincided with the integration of the public schools by federal mandate. A memory she often shared was of a first grade student asking whether she was black or white. She proudly told him "I'm brown." Eventually she became qualified in and taught Special Education for high schoolers, which she continued for about 25 years.

Helen was a proud member of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). Around 1990, she traveled with two of her siblings and a cousin to New York state to research their family history. Their paternal grandfather, Morris Varian, an American soldier from Scarsdale, NY, had served in the Philippines during the Spanish American War and remained there until he was elderly. To become a member of the DAR, Helen proved she had an ancestor who fought in the American Revolutionary War. In studying her genealogy, she and her husband, Bernie, made several more trips to New York for further research. She was very active in the Blue Ridge Chapter of the DAR and eventually served a three-year term as its Regent (2016-19). In her retirement, she also volunteered for several years at Thomas Jefferson's plantation retreat home in Poplar Forest near her home. One of her proudest moments was organizing an annual citizenship ceremony and celebration for new American citizens.

Helen loved life, loved to travel, and often took risks. She was loyal, friendly, energetic, hard-working, appreciative, congenial, open-minded, and cheerful. Circa 1962, she and her friend, Rosanne, spent half a year on a driving tour in Europe and made several lifelong friends. In 1969, she and Bernie toured Europe all summer in a new VW Beetle, leaving two-year-old Eric behind with his aunt and uncle. For approximately 40 years, Helen and Bernie and their kids were involved with skiing in the winters and other activities in the summers at Snowshoe Mountain Resort in West Virginia where they owned property.

During their five decades in Lynchburg, she and Bernie hosted several foreign exchange students and friends from around the world. For seven years, they hosted two Korean teachers of English



Obituary

Helen Varian Davis

MAY 6, 1936 - NOV 24, 2023

for two weeks each year (in a program with the Lynchburg City Schools) and made many friends in the process. During their retirement, Helen and Bernie made tourist trips in many countries, some by driving, some by bus tours, some by ocean cruises, and some by river cruises. With destinations including Egypt, Australia, Peru, Japan, Thailand, Russia, and Antarctica, they eventually visited each of the seven continents.

The last three months of Helen's life were difficult. She suffered from Alzheimer's for several years and in her final months experienced various unresolved health complications including COVID during her final days. We are sad to lose her, but we know she will never suffer again.



Tribute Wall

Helen Varian Davis
MAY 6, 1936 - NOV 24, 2023



Anonymous sent a Large Basket Garden to the Davis family.

December 8 at 9:49 AM



Anonymous sent an Emerald Garden Basket to the Davis family.

December 6 at 1:28 PM



Ann Marie Davis shared 4 photos to the **Shared Memories - Helen Davis** album.

December 6 at 10:22 AM





Media

Helen Varian Davis
MAY 6, 1936 - NOV 24, 2023



Ann Marie Davis shared 4 photos to the **Shared Memories - Helen Davis** album. December 6 at 10:22 AM





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Helen by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



Scan to Visit