



Helen Sutherland

October 8, 1920 - March 26, 2017

Helen Ruth Gearreald Sutherland, 96, died peacefully at the Stephenville Senior Care Center, Stephenville, Texas on March 26, 2017. She was born October 8, 1920 in Stephenville, attended school there, graduated from Texas State College for Women at Denton, Texas in 1940, and went on to graduate study at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, now called Virginia Tech. There she met Robert Warren Sutherland, a senior cadet from Richmond, Virginia. They married on June 12, 1941 in the Bruton Parish Church at Williamsburg, Virginia. In the next years, Helen became the mother of three children, Rob, Neal and Ruth Leigh.

Following many moves from Montgomery, Alabama to three cities in North Carolina and three more in Texas, her family settled in Houston, Texas where Helen tirelessly devoted herself to her family, her church and her community. From the age of seven, following her parents' example, she was a committed and active member of the First Baptist Church. In Houston's River Oaks Baptist Church, she was a nursery school teacher and a leader and teacher of her women's class. She was a devoted teacher of English as a second language to families from Japan. Most of all, she was a gifted teacher by example throughout her life, invariably cheerful in every trying situation, quietly communicating especially in her constant letters.

Even in her last years, with failing eyesight and other infirmities, Helen was a faithful and committed correspondent with all those whose lives she touched. Until her last months, she never failed to write a thank you note or a card to those who showed her any kindness. Each note from her was personally encouraging and prompted gratitude in return. In November 1952, one of her women's circle wrote to her, "I want to tell you what a splendid lesson you taught Sunday morning. It was a lesson that should make each one who heard it want to be a better Christian...It was so powerful! I am ever grateful for the privilege of being in your class...We all know that your life is an example of what you teach us..." Another wrote in the little notes found in Helen's childhood Bible: "I long so much for the close fellowship that I know you do have with the Lord."

Tucked in that same Bible was a letter written by her devoted father Jesse Neal Gearreald in April, 1946 when he was “deeply burdened” about his “Baby Girl.” Even before he knew her condition and that she had called the doctor, he was sick with worry and “could not keep back the tears for hours but, of course, I prayed the Lord would take care of you even if I did not know what the need was.” When the word came that she had strep throat which might prove fatal, “I was then more humbled than ever since I believe Jesus had given me these definite impressions. Since He loves you and since He knows how much I love Him and love you, He as a very kind friend let me know you were in trouble...You will understand that there is no boasting or presuming in my heart, but humble gratitude for God’s marvelous grace and goodness to us.” He concluded, “Isn’t it comforting, as we learned last Sunday that our Savior is not just a Christ in Heaven and in the Church...but that He is Christ of the ‘Way’ just as He was to the two on the road to Emmaus. We are grateful that you can be up again.” Her father’s love, faith and spirit of gratitude remained at the heart of Helen’s life.

Beginning early in their marriage, Helen and Bob planned to retire to a home they would design and build after they purchased Tull family acreage in Carlton, Texas. This dream was solidly built on three main goals: conserve the land with the careful planting of grasses and management of the grazing of cattle; establish a home welcoming to and comfortable for family and friends; work tirelessly to better the small Carlton Baptist Church. They moved to Carlton in 1983-84.

Helen was predeceased by her parents Etta Tull and Jesse Neal Gearreald, her brother Tull Neal Gearreald, Robert Warren Sutherland, her husband of 64 years and their daughter Ruth Leigh, who died at age eleven in Houston. Ruthie was a beloved child with Down Syndrome.

Helen is survived by her two sons Robert Warren and his wife Gretchen and Neal Gearreald and his wife Linda; grandchildren: Kirsten and husband Todd Holmquist, Rob and wife Janet, Neal, Jessica, Sarah and husband Jason Wheeler, Marcus and wife Nicole; great-grandchildren: Connor, Emily, Max, Dylan, Eric and Marek; nieces and nephews: Parker Williamson and wife Patty, Warren Williamson and wife Evelyn, Roger Williamson and wife Karen, Tull Gearreald and wife Nely, Linda Campbell and husband John, Karen Gearreald and Mark Gearreald and wife Sharon Spickler; great nieces and nephews: Elizabeth Gearreald and husband Scott Hyun, Tull Gearreald III and wife Beverly Cope, Madeline Miller and husband Nathaniel Drake and their daughters Vera and Freya, Michael Williamson and wife Stacie, their children Whitman, Miller and Merritt, Elizabeth Williamson Bauman and husband Stephen Bauman, Andrew Williamson and wife Kristen and their sons Aaron and Noah, David Williamson and son Jacob, Ellen and

husband Nick Minier, their children Lily and Ben, Stephen Williamson, Eric Williamson and wife Lynnea, their son Nolen; many devoted friends including members of Carlton Baptist Church especially Pastor Dave Keith and wife Vicki, Helen's close neighbors J.M. and Vicki Taylor but also all the people who in her words, "throughout her life gave her kindness, encouragement, tough love and help....God's loving care for me," she said, "has been evident in my life from birth to my death. I cannot remember a time when I did not know that God loved me."

Graveside Services for Helen will be at the Carlton Cemetery, Thursday, March 30, 2017 at 10:30AM. In lieu of gifts of flowers, memorials may be made to the Carlton Baptist Church Mission Fund.

Cemetery Details

Carlton Cemetery

Carlton, TX

Previous Events

Graveside Services

MAR 30. 10:30 AM (CT)

Carlton Cemetery
Carlton, TX