



## Helen Parker

October 20, 1920 - January 31, 2021

Helen Eileen Parker

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Helen Eileen Parker, age 100, of Royal Oak, MI passed away January 31, 2021 of natural causes. She died at home, surrounded by her loving family.

Although impossible to give a complete account of Helen's life, there are certain irrefutable facts that might give you a clue as to who she was-

She was born Helen Eileen Nichols in Waverly, Missouri on October 20th, 1920. She moved to Hartshorne Oklahoma when she was 3. She was the oldest of two daughters to Etta and Oscar Nichols. Sarah Catherine was Helen's younger sister by 2 years. The daughter of a sharecropper/coal-miner, Helen grew up in the Oklahoma farm life. She survived Typhoid Fever and Yellow Jaundice. She picked cotton when the temperature was over 100 degrees. She milked cows, drew water from the well for both her family and the migrant workers that helped pick cotton, rode horses and various other chores including hunting. Helen owned her own rifle and, by all accounts, was a good shot.

She lived through the Dust Bowl which ravaged farm life in the south throughout the 1930's along with the Great Depression. She could tell hair-raising stories of her and little sister Sarah huddling down in a storm shelter with all of the adult men holding the door shut as a cyclone rattled to get it open. Or when locusts came in swarms and ate all of the crops for miles around.

But life wasn't always so harsh. While in Oklahoma, she also met her future husband - Jay Nelson Parker - a farm worker and mechanic from Hartshorne, Oklahoma. They married in 1938.

In 1940 life on the farm abruptly ended when Helen, Jay and infant daughter Jayetta moved north to the big city of Hazel Park, Michigan in search of work.

With the U.S. involvement in World War Two in 1941, Jay landed a job in a factory, pouring steel to make aircraft parts for the war effort. It was steady work. They later moved from Hazel Park to Ferndale, before finally settling in Royal Oak in 1957 – in a house they would live in for the rest of their lives. Together they celebrated over sixty years of marriage.

Learning how to sew at a young age from her mother, Helen hired in at Chrysler Corp in the mid 1960's and worked sewing seat cushions for automobiles until her retirement in 1982.

She was a good Christian woman and attended the Ferndale Free Methodist Church; her home church from the time she arrived in Michigan until she was physically unable to attend. During that time, she added another accomplishment to her resume - she was a Sunday school teacher - for over twenty-five years.

In the early 1990's after Jay had a stroke and could no longer walk, Helen saw to his comfort, administering medications, arranging doctor appointments and faithfully taking care of him until his death in 2003.

Either from years of a harsh farm life or simply that she was part of that “Greatest Generation”, Helen had a mental toughness, a durability. A do-it-yourself attitude, a calming stability. A great resolve and gentle outspokenness. In a world of few certainties, there was one thing you could always count on, and that was that Mom would be there for you.

When kids in the neighborhood would bring her sick or injured animals, she would nurse the animals back to health and free them.

Eighty years after leaving Oklahoma, you could still detect her southern heritage in her voice and the words and phrases she used. She referred to anyone she talked to as “Hon” - short for Honey, or “Sug” - short for sugar. She loved life and family unconditionally.

She was a sweet soul. Loved to read, loved to talk, loved music, loved to sing, loved to laugh, loved the smell of red roses and of course Helen loved coffee. A great cook. She could bake and decorate a birthday cake better than any store-bought cake.

You always felt welcomed at her house. Always felt comfortable because, even if you didn't live there, you somehow knew you were home. You didn't have to call before you

went to visit. You didn't need an appointment - Just come over whenever you want. The door was always open. She always offered good advice, or just an ear if you needed it. There was always food in the fridge and coffee just a brew away.

She could handle the toughest situations that life could throw at her, but then in the next moment she could be thrilled about the simple things - flowers blooming in the spring, waving to a friend out the window, a grandchild in her arms or even a baby squirrel who needed care.

Helen never met a person she didn't like. Never at a loss for words. A kind word for everyone. In the words of one of her son's, "She was even nice to people who didn't deserve to be treated nice". She was "Mom" to every kid on the street. She loved them - and they loved her.

In short: Helen Eileen Parker is not only a great example of what a mother should aspire to be, but what a human being should aspire to be. Modest and humble she would probably be embarrassed to hear all of this attention focused on her, but that's just who Helen Parker was.

After living in this world for 100 years, 3 months, 11 days, she has gone to be with God, yet, somehow it feels that she has been taken from us way too soon.

Surviving Helen are her 5 children, Robert Nelson (Donna), Pamala Maud, Catherine Sue, Clinton Mead, and Marc Allen (Susan).

Also, Helen's nephew, Estil Stephenson and wife Judy.

Four grandchildren, Carey Denha, Carlee Denha, Shelly Fillion and James Parker, four great grandchildren, and one great-great grandchild.

Helen is predeceased by her husband Jay Nelson (2003) and oldest daughter Jayetta (2012) (husband Clarence) and grandson Wendell (2015).

Visitation will be held at Wm. Sullivan & Son Funeral Home in Royal Oak on Friday, February 5th from 2:00 pm – 7:00 pm

Wm. Sullivan & Son Funeral Home  
705 W Eleven Mile Rd.  
Royal Oak, MI 48067

Funeral will be held at Ferndale Free Methodist Church on Saturday, February 6th at 11:00 am.

The family is asking that in lieu of flowers, please send a donation in Helen's name to:

The Ferndale Free Methodist Church

1950 Woodward Heights

Ferndale, MI 48220

Share a memory at <http://www.SullivanFuneralDirectors.com>.

# Cemetery

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## Roseland Park Cemetery

29001 Woodward Avenue (NW corner of 12  
Mile and Woodward)  
Berkley, MI, 48072

# Events

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**FEB** **Visitation** 02:00PM - 07:00PM

**5**

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Wm. Sullivan and Son Funeral  
Directors-Royal Oak

705 W. Eleven Mile Road, Royal  
Oak, MI, US, 48067

**FEB** **Funeral Service** 11:00AM

**6**

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Ferndale Free Methodist Church  
1950 Woodward Heights, Ferndale,  
MI, US, 48220

# Comments

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“ Just saw that Helen passed. What a dear, wonderful lady. She was a loved part of the chair exercise group at the Clawson Senior Center for many years. Her warm and friendly smile and caring ways brightened every class.

**Kathy Leenhouts** - February 06 at 09:47 AM

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“ Gracious Lavender Basket was purchased for the family of Helen Parker.



February 02 at 01:02 PM

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“ Helen Parker was a beautiful precious women of God and she will be missed. She was always kind to everyone. Love you Mrs Parker, Jerry and Diana Winslow

**Diana Larry Winslow** - February 02 at 11:40 AM