



Helen A. Pestana

April 28, 1939 - December 29, 2022

Hampton - After 83 years full of life Helen has moved on from this world. She died peacefully in her sleep at home where her husband Norbert was caring for her.

Helen was born in Newport, R.I. in April 1939 where her father, who was a Swedish immigrant from Gothenburg, was working on submarines for the U.S. Navy. Her family later moved to Andover, Mass. where she was raised in the First Congregational Church and graduated from Punchard High School. She was a member of the Masonic family, serving as a Rainbow Girl and later Eastern Star.

In the late 1960s Helen worked for Avco Corporation and drove a Ford Mustang in British Racing Green. She lived outside New England only once, when her first husband was stationed in Huntsville, Ala. She spent more than a decade working as a secretary in the south at the height of the Civil Rights movement. She moved back to Massachusetts on her own in 1968.

In the early 1970s Helen worked as the activities director at Mary Immaculate Nursing Home in Lawrence. She loved working with people and hearing their stories. An empathetic listener and avid pet lover, she led pet therapy and reality orientation programming.

Helen met her husband Norbert “Noby” Henry Pestana at a Parents Without Partners meeting, but neither Helen nor Norbert were parents at the time. Birthdays just one day apart, theirs was a quick courtship. Helen handmade her wedding dress and beamed with gratitude as her mother, new mother-in-law, and families came together to celebrate. Helen made fast friends with Noby’s mother Beverly; they traveled to flower shows and craft fairs together with her lifelong best friend, Sue.

For some time Helen thought she couldn’t have children. An easy conversationalist with an open heart and friendly smile, Helen would tell anyone who would listen how she was suddenly ‘Fertile Myrtle’, in her late 30s/early 40s! Helen had a daughter, Julie Kilman Pestana. She gave Julie many nicknames, but mostly she called her “My Dolly”.

Just two years later Helen had a son, Norbert Scott Pestana. She did everything she could to make the lives of her children special, and to make them feel important. She was forever singing their praises.

For 30 years Helen and Norbert made a home for their family in Salem, N.H. She commuted to Genesys Software Systems in Methuen and later to Brooks School in North Andover.

Helen and Noby’s split-level home on a cul de sac in Salem was a great source of pride. Helen enjoyed her gardens, a strawberry and rhubarb patch, and many spectacular irises and roses. She hosted parties and made beautiful foods, cakes and had special recipes for any occasion. She had a plant or a bird feeder in every window. She loved chickadees, her kitties and reveled in the many creatures that lived in the woods and along the brook in the back.

Helen had a beautiful voice and sung in the choir at the First Congregational

Church of Salem. She later delighted in her son Scott's participation in the Boston Gay Men's Choir, which is where he met his partner Tom. Helen loved music of all kinds.

She loved her friends, many of whom spanned generations. She was a generous gift giver and never boring. She loved the ocean, going for long rides in fast cars or on a motorcycle, and enjoying food and wine. She loved to race her Ford SHO—it was the perfect accommodation for her “lead foot”. As often as they could Helen and Noby launched their Chris-Craft boat called “Kinship” off its trailer and into the Merrimack River, happily motoring out to sea.

Helen was resourceful and always prepared. When Julie moved to New York she helped her move and traveled with Noby and also with friends to visit her often. She wrote and emailed long letters to close the distance between them. When her daughter and son-in-law George moved from Brooklyn to Miami she drove Julie's manual transmission Honda through long stretches of highway while Julie slept.

Later in life Helen marked time with the ebb and flow of New England baseball, football, and lobster seasons. She and Noby enjoyed many a lobster roll and evening ride for ice cream “down-the-beach.” They continued to travel by car, visiting Julie and her family in Miami and later in Atlanta as often as possible. Today we imagine her continuing to cruise along, only now she's restored to her Mustang and SHO days.

Helen is survived by Norbert, her husband of 49 years, her son Scott and his partner Thomas Dawkins, her daughter Julie and her husband George Zaharatos, and her granddaughters Susanna Helen and Evangeline Lily, her brother Ernest Kilman, her sister-in-law Karen Phelps, her brother-in-law Eric

Pestana, and many well-loved cousins, nieces and nephews. Together we will remember her grit, her passion and her great, unconditional love, immense generosity and encouragement of her family and friends.

Tribute Wall

LG

“ *My sincere condolences to Norbert, Julie, Scott & family. It's hard to say goodbye to the sweetest person I've ever known. I'll miss Helen's laugh, lovable personality, memories with the Genesys girls and road trip adventures. I will never forget you "special lady". Love & prayers to all.*

Leslie Goida - January 02, 2023 at 10:22 PM

EP

“ *Ed French And SHAREN PESTANA lit a candle in memory of Helen A. Pestana*



Ed French and SHAREN PESTANA - January 01, 2023 at 08:02 PM

GZ

“ *I couldn't have asked for a more loving and encouraging mother in law. She was always there to cheer us along, lift our spirits and take us for a fast drive now and again! Helen will be dearly missed. Her memory will be everlasting.*

George Zaharatos - December 31, 2022 at 05:48 PM

NO

“ *1 file added to the album Tribute Wall*



Norbert - December 30, 2022 at 04:36 PM

NO

Helen Kilman in her Rainbow gown

Norbert - December 30, 2022 at 09:38 PM

NO

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Norbert - December 30, 2022 at 02:55 PM

NO

Norby drives off chasing Helen

Norbert - December 30, 2022 at 02:56 PM

NO

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Norbert - December 30, 2022 at 01:51 PM

NO

Helen ever the animal lover with Ponce in Atlanta.

Norbert - December 30, 2022 at 01:52 PM

NO

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Norbert - December 30, 2022 at 01:32 PM

NO

Sue and Mom had an excellent adventure at the Cloisters in New York.

Norbert - January 02, 2023 at 12:16 PM

NO

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Norbert - December 30, 2022 at 01:04 PM

NO

Ernie, Julie, Gramy Anna K, Grampy Ernest K. and Helen our Avatar of Love.

Norbert - December 30, 2022 at 01:51 PM