



Helen Antoinette Vanasse

May 25, 1940 - February 5, 2023

Helen Antoinette (Szpila) Vanasse, beloved daughter of Antoinette (Klimoski) Szpila O'Leary and Anthony Szpila, was born May 25, 1940, in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Helen attended St. Michael's Catholic Schools, in Northampton from 1946 until graduating in 1958. She was awarded a scholarship to Mercy Hospital School of Nursing, living in the hospital dormitory and graduating in 1961.

Helen married the love of her life, Conrad Vanasse, on December 30, 1961 at St. John Cantius Catholic Church in Northampton, Mass. Conrad had accepted a job offer from Marriott and the two newlyweds immediately moved to Washington, DC, settling in Naylor Gardens Apartments in Southeast DC. Helen instantly began working at Providence Hospital in Northeast DC; she took three buses to get to her hospital shift as a dedicated working new wife. She soon became a new mother, moving with Conrad to the DC suburb of Hillcrest Heights, Maryland. They later moved to Indian Head, Maryland, where they settled for good.

Helen and Conrad raised four children and were also foster parents to four infants over the years. Helen loved and cherished her family life most of all. She was the teacher, doctor, nurse, referee, babysitter, chauffeur, chef and best friend to her children and husband simultaneously.

Helen had a natural gift caring for her patients with dignity, respect and true compassion, caring for thousands of patients and working for over 50 years as a Registered Nurse. Her gift was later exemplified through mentoring and precepting many young nurses, sharing the wisdom and experience she had gained over the years. Patients and families would sometimes stop her when out, recognize her, and tell her how thankful they were for “the nurse that took such good care of me/or my family member.” Helen had such a positive impact on her patient’s needs; she would give homemade “gold stars” to patients with challenging illnesses, or when they passed a significant milestone. She truly always enjoyed helping people. Helen was blessed to work in a variety of areas, including pediatrics, internal medicine, geriatrics, nephrology and intensive care units. She worked in hospitals throughout DC and Maryland, retiring after dedicating 35 years at Southern Maryland Hospital Center.

Helen had an incredible green thumb. She regularly read gardening books and could come up with the name of a plant or tree off the top of her head, knew where it came from and how to care for it. Helen was a great artist and especially enjoyed visiting museums. She was a superior cook and could come up with a delicious meal —no recipe— in no time, thrilling her family with her culinary acumen. Helen taught her children to cook by having each child take one night per week to prepare any meal they desired. She was always very proud of this endeavor, savoring meals cooked by her children. Helen thoroughly enjoyed taking cooking, gardening, art and painting classes later in life, usually with Conrad by her side.

Helen was devoted to her Catholic faith and never missed Mass. She had attended Catholic schools and often talked about her years living with the nuns in her nursing school in Massachusetts. For years, she and Conrad were involved in monthly Catholic Family Meetings, where they enjoyed very close

friendships, faith and food. She also taught CCD classes to children in her parish for years and instilled in her own children strong Catholic faith. Helen and Conrad later became members of the Mount Carmel Secular Order, devoting many hours to prayer and thanksgiving. Helen also had a remarkable ability to always see the good in any situation. She was always positive and supportive to anyone that she talked to and her faith always guided her.

Helen was an incredible woman and mother. Her love for her family was profound. Helen was adored, cherished and loved by her husband of 57 years, her four children, six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. She is survived by sons Conrad and Paul, daughters Jacquelyn Ferry and Donna Dorschner, sister Christine Ravish, daughter-in-law Sharan, sons-in-law Donald Dorschner and David Ferry, grandchildren Conrad, Rachel, Evan, Brian, Abigail and Jane, and great-grandchildren Cohen, Caiden and newborn great-grandson Wilder. Helen is predeceased by her beloved husband, her parents, younger brother, John Szpila and newborn great-grandson Cameron McCormack.

The family will receive guests at Mount Carmel Monastery in LaPlata, Maryland, on Wednesday, February 15, 2023, 9am to 10am. Funeral Mass celebration will be held at 10am, with graveside burial ceremony immediately following, also at Mount Carmel Monastery.

If inclined, donations may be made online or via check in Helen Vanasse's name to the wonderful people at Hospice of the Chesapeake:

<https://www.hospicechesapeake.org/giving/donate-now/>

Cemetery Details

Mt. Carmel Monastery Cemetery

5678 Mt. Carmel Road
La Plata, MD 20646

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB 15. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (ET)

Mt. Carmel Monastery Cemetery
5678 Mt. Carmel Road
La Plata, MD 20646

Burial

FEB 15. 11:00 AM (ET)

Mt. Carmel Monastery Cemetery
5678 Mt. Carmel Road
La Plata, MD 20646

Tribute Wall



“ *Helen Antoinette Vanasse*

October 08, 2023 at 10:45 PM



“ *Helen Antoinette Vanasse*

October 04, 2023 at 03:12 PM



“ *"Sending You an Angel" Statue to Express Sympathy for Funeral Or Memorial was purchased for the family of Helen Antoinette Vanasse.*



February 17, 2023 at 03:36 AM



“ *We are very sorry for your loss. You have our sincere sympathy. Mary Ann always enjoyed the 'baking' get togethers that your Mom held just before the Christmas holidays. Please remember the good times and cherish the memories. As Catholic Christians we believe that at the end of time we will be resurrected from the dead and, hopefully, have a happy everlating life with our maker and loved ones in the world to come.*

Eugene, Mary Ann Stefko & Family

EUGENE STEFKO - February 14, 2023 at 03:20 PM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Helen Antoinette Vanasse.*



February 13, 2023 at 12:26 PM



“ *St Joseph Secular Carmel of Port Tobacco purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Helen Antoinette Vanasse.*



St Joseph Secular Carmel of Port Tobacco - February 10, 2023 at 06:04 PM



“ *Helen was a member of our Secular Carmelite community and always brightened our meetings with her kind spirit and gentle smile. She and Conrad were a cornerstone in our group. Our Morning Prayer at our February OCDS meeting will be dedicated to Helen. May the Lord be a great comfort to her family.*

Dianne Soloninka, OCDS - February 10, 2023 at 11:10 AM

KL

“ To The Vanasse Family,
I met Helen at The Charleston Senior
Community. She was very smart, outgoing
and very interesting. She loved to help her
friends at The Charleston. I loved Helen!
Prayers for peace and comfort to you all during this difficult time.
With Sympathy,
Kathy Leighty



Kathleen S Leighty - February 09, 2023 at 02:02 PM

WG

“ We had a lot of good ‘gal’ shopping travels with our ‘crew’, and we
always enjoyed the parties at their home where we met with friends.
Helen was a sweetheart and a good nurse who gave of herself.

Wanda Gardner - February 08, 2023 at 09:04 AM

MT

“ Mr and Mrs Kok-Foo Theang purchased the Simp
ly Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Helen
Antoinette Vanasse.



Mr and Mrs Kok-Foo Theang - February 08, 2023 at 09:01 AM

LH

“ My condolences to the Vanasse family. May
all the beautiful memories you share bring
you comfort at this difficult time. God Bless.



Loraine Davies Hennessy - February 08, 2023 at 08:12 AM

EY

“ I will always cherish the memories i have from one summer when i got to stay with My uncle Connie, aunt Helen, Randy, Jackie, Donna & Paul. She was a very special person, a wonderful mom! I remember everything we did together. From seeing all the important sights in Washington, going to Washington Senators game right down to Randy's T ball game and making homemade ice cream! She now knows how special that time was for me! Thank you aunt Helen & Uncle Connie! ❤️❤️

Ellen Yates - February 07, 2023 at 11:01 PM