



Helen Marshall Alcorn

January 17, 2008

Helen Marie Marshall Alcorn, 101, died on Thursday, January 17, 2008 at the Martin Center of the Western Home Communities. She was born in Decatur, IL on December 8, 1906 to Nora Alice Damewood Marshall and Robert Edward Marshall. Helen was the youngest of three children. Bonnie Lucille Marshall was born in 1903 and Edgar Blanchard Marshall was born in 1900. Edgar Marshall is the father of Judith Finkelstein who is Helen's niece and closest living relative.

The Marshall family moved to Niantic, IL shortly after Helen was born and lived there until 1909 when tragically, Helen's mother suddenly died. Her brother Edgar, moved to Evanston, IL to live with his maternal grandmother, Ida Caledonia Seay Damewood, and Helen and her sister Bonnie, went to Kansas to live with their father's sister and her husband, Dora and James Downing. When Helen was 8 years old, her father was married to Della Dungan, and she and her sister went to live with them.

Della was a devoted mother to Helen. Soon after the family was established on a farm outside of Coffyville, Kansas, Helen was badly burned in a fire at the country school she was attending. It was the custom to burn the weeds that had grown up around the school, and the children were helping to rake and tend the fire. Unfortunately, Helen's dress caught fire and she ran to her teacher for help. Her legs and buttocks sustained second and third degree

burns. Her stepmother nursed her back to health. She remembers the kind and tender care, the fact that she never received another spanking, and that she got the strength back in her legs by climbing trees.

In 1922 Helen left school and got a job in a Drug Store in Coffeyville, KS. She soon knew that she wanted a better job, and in 1923, she moved to Evanston, IL to live with her mother's family. She worked in sales in a department store for a while, but the management recognized her potential and she soon moved to office work. She took classes in short hand, typing and switchboard operation and became an office manager for various firms. She continued this work in Chicago until 1948.

On June 19, 1948 Helen married Jennings Bryan Alcorn in a Methodist church in Joliet, IL. Jim was a contractor who specialized in building houses in and around Milwaukee, WI. Helen earned a Realtors license so she could sell the houses. She also kept the books for their business.

Helen had always regretted that she had not graduated from High School. She went to night school at the Milwaukee Technical Institute and graduated in 1967 as Valedictorian of her class. She was offered a full tuition college scholarship, but did not take it as she felt she should devote her time to her husband.

Jim and Helen retired to a lake home outside of Cecil, WI in 1975. Helen was an active member of the Bonduel, WI United Methodist Church. Jim died in 1986. In 1991, Helen moved to West Bend, WI. She developed colon cancer in 1995 and moved to the Stanard Assisted Living Center in Cedar Falls, Iowa to be near her sister-in-law, Audrey Marshall and her niece and nephew, Judy and Mel Finkelstein. She wanted to be more independent and in 1996 moved to Walnut Court where she lived until returning to the Stanard Center in 2001.

Helen's strong faith in God guided her throughout her life. She always faced things with a positive attitude and was sure these two personal characteristics helped her to live to be 101 years old. At this time, her family is thankful for the fine care given to Helen by Dr. Diane Heindl and Nurse Diane Caldwell and their colleagues; the personnel of Sartori Hospital; the administrators and care givers at the Stanard Assisted Living Center, and the Elizabeth Martin Center of the Western Home Communities; and the many people from the Cedar Valley Hospice who were so helpful at the end of Helen's long life. Helen was loved by all who knew her for her sunny disposition, kind and loving nature, keen mind, and zest for life. She was a joy to be with and we will all miss her very much.

Helen was preceded in death by her parents, her husband Jennings B. Alcorn, her brother and sister-in-law Edgar and Audrey Marshall; her sister Bonnie, and her nieces Alice and Phyllis.

Survivors include her niece and nephew Dr.'s Judith and Melville Finkelstein and their children, Mark Finkelstein of Des Moines; James and Carol Brewer and their children Gregory and Janelle of Hawthorn Woods, IL; Ann and Darrel Van Buren of Nampa, ID; and Blair and Kristin Brewer and their daughter, Gabrielle of Ames. Also surviving are a niece and nephew Betty and Tom Zarse of Toledo, OH; and California grand nieces and nephews who include Patricia and Ernie Parker, Dr. James and Bev Hendrickson, Diana Sue and Matt Olson, and many great-great-grand nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, please make contributions in memory of Helen to the Western Home Communities or the Cedar Valley Hospice.

Funeral services will be held in the Chapel of the Stanard Assisted Living Center on Saturday, February 2nd at 1:30p.m. Family will be receiving friends

in the East Solarium after the service.

Tribute Wall



“ I first met Helen when she was living at Walnut Court. I had just begun my ministry with Waterloo First United Methodist and she was one of the first of our seniors that I visited. When it was my turn to do devotions at Walnut Court, I always tried to connect with Helen, although I missed her a few times because she was out and about! When I did catch up with her, I always enjoyed our visits.

As you celebrate Helen's life, know that those of us at Waterloo First will be with you in spirit and as we lift you up in prayer this weekend.

*Rev. Pam Uffers, Associate Pastor
Waterloo First United Methodist Church*

February 01, 2008 at 12:00 AM