



Helen Rose Gibbs

March 23, 1923 - June 1, 2018

Longtime Plymouth resident Helen Rose Kimbrell Gibbs, 95, died peacefully Friday, June 1 at her home surrounded by her loving family.

The fourth oldest of 12 children, Gibbs, a Missouri native, arrived in Michigan in 1963 during a blinding Michigan snowstorm that flipped the family's "unsafe at any speed" Corvair on its side.

Gibbs, her first husband, Robert Powell Kimbrell, and her three children, Julie, Jamie and Robert, miraculously survived the accident unscathed and settled first in Livonia, one of the "new" suburban areas ringing the city of Detroit. She and her family joined the Newburg United Methodist Church in Livonia, MI shortly thereafter and she remained a member for nearly 50 years.

In the turmoil of the late sixties, the avid homemaker and her family moved north to Highland, MI where her children attended Milford public schools. After her first husband, Bob, died in 1974, she met Richard Gibbs, an engineer, through the Highland Methodist Church and added three stepchildren, Richard, Carol, and Bob, to her brood, creating a veritable "Brady Bunch."

After Helen Rose and Richard married and the children graduated from local schools, the duo began to tire of his long commute to work as a Burroughs engineer in Plymouth and returned to the Plymouth area and the congregation

of the Newburg United Methodist Church.

It was there Gibbs earned local fame as “the Pie lady” for her unparalleled baking efforts for the church’s annual bake sale. Once featured in the Livonia Observer as the Pie Lady, she routinely baked hundreds of mouthwatering homemade pies (apple, rhubarb, cherry, blueberry, pecan and pumpkin among them), selling them to local residents, with the church using the proceeds to benefit the area’s poor and underserved families.

Gibbs also collected her dessert recipes into The Pie Lady’s cookbook, which sold out in two reprintings. Her pies were known for a flaky piecrust and she once confided to a local reporter that the secret to the flaky crust was oil and vinegar, although she never confided the precise details of her recipe for crust.

Her love of baking was transmitted to her five grandchildren. Her oldest grandchild, James Powell Szegi, says he learned much from his grandmother. “I was a very active kid and she kept me busy in the kitchen. Often I was there with Grandma and we were in the kitchen baking. The key, she told me, was measuring precisely,” he confided. Szegi still uses the skills he learned to feed his active family.

Her love for family gatherings was epic. Gibbs loved nothing better than to prepare a meal for 40 and serve it buffet style at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Holidays, birthdays and anniversaries provided many opportunities to share her baking acumen. In later years, she once confided that as a farm girl in Fayette, Missouri, her favorite childhood days were when the families from her church’s congregation spent the entire day gathering together to share food and visit each other.

In addition to her zest for life, friends, family and baking, Gibbs had an earlier,

perhaps surprising side.

As a young woman of 20, she and her husband, Bob, moved from Missouri to the bustling city of Washington, D.C., to join the war effort during World War II. For 10 years, she worked as an identification clerk for American soldiers under the auspices of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. She retired from government service upon the birth of her first child.

Helen Rose enjoyed the city's many activities and went to the movies every week with her husband. She loved to read books and avidly played cards on weekends with the couple's many friends. She also dabbled in the arts and was adept at sculpting small animals from clay. In addition, she left behind a selection of skilled oil paintings.

Friends, reading, movies, cards and games were a lifelong passion. Her friends at the seniors only condo complex in Plymouth, where she lived independently until the end of her life, often engaged in heated games of cards, dominoes and dice at the condo's clubhouse. Among her remaining notes during her final days was a card game tally played with her hospice caregiver.

Gibbs is survived by four sisters, one brother, and their spouses, her six children and their spouses, five grandchildren and their loved ones, numerous great-grandchildren, and dozens and dozens of extended family members and loving friends. She was preceded in death by her second husband, Richard Gibbs, who died in 2001.

A memorial service celebrating her life will be held at 11 a.m. Friday, June 22 at the Newburg United Methodist Church in Livonia, MI. Her second oldest grandchild, Kim Kocsis, will deliver a eulogy. In lieu of flowers, the family

suggests donations be made to the church ministry or Arbor Hospice. To share a memory, please use the Share a Memory tab on the web page.

Tribute Wall



“ *Helen Rose Gibbs*

December 07, 2023 at 05:11 AM



“ *Rose was a wonderful Christian lady. She was also the worlds best pie maker, she taught my how to make chocolate cream pie, which is loved by my family...*

Linda - February 10, 2022 at 01:59 PM