Chopyak-Scheider Funeral Home, Inc.

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Helen Loretta "Helen" Picciano

March 10, 1926 – March 21, 2020



After a long journey, Helen Loretta (Brown) Picciano, (aka "Nana" and "Grandma Red Hat"), 94, passed peacefully at Elizabeth Church Manor, on Saturday, March 21,2020. Her last gentle breath reunited her with her beloved, Frederick George; her son, John; sisters, Mary, Theresa and Catherine; parents, John and Mary; and other dear ones.

Helen never met a stranger, but cherished most making memories with her family, especially, her children: Lorette, Elaine (Mark)Englert, Peter, Deacon Tom and Julie (John's beloved); Grandchildren: Andy (Amy)Englert, Susan (Ben)DeCastro, Lars (Meridith) Hanson, Peter (Robyn)Englert, Hannah (Cole)Brunson; great-grandchildren: Ella, Juliet, Ingrid, Hayley, Ellis and Silvia. Also, Julie and John's family: Mark, Janet, Crystal, Vicky, Braedon and Julia. And, also, many dear nieces, nephews and cousins.

Helen was born and raised in Queens, NY. This youngest of the Brown girls, Helen lost her daddy, John Brown, at 5 yrs. old. She did well in grade school, skipping ahead ½ a grade. She traveled by train to Bishop McDonnell High School, Brooklyn, earning the only diploma among her sisters. It was there she met Fred's sister, Jeannette Picciano. While Fred served in Patton's Army, she worked in NYC. Her favorite employment was in the millinery department of Bergdorf-Goodman, the place she developed her passion for hats. She chose red as her color for her hats and dresses, except March, when she wore green for her March 10th birthday and St Patrick's Day.

After WWII, Helen and Fred were married at the first Mass said by Fred's high school friend, the newly ordained, Father Henry Benack, at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Queens Village. The family doubled in size at the couple's first home in Mineola with the arrival of John and then Lorette. The family moved upstate, near Fred's mother's relatives. In April 1957, expecting another child, they bought a brand-new house. That June, Elaine arrived, followed minutes later by a surprise – her twin, Peter. Then, exactly, 8 ½ years after their first son, Tom was born.

The Lyndale Drive home and wonderful neighbors provided many fond memories of block parties, and the children played games like "scatter on 50." Tricycles became bicycles as the block grew to 63 children. The house provided comfort through the years, especially in the golden years when Helen's memory began to decline. Thankfully, John made provisions for her long-term care that extended her years there and earned her the honor of the longest original owner on the block. This was also possible, through Deacon Tom assuming the role of live-in caregiver, with continual assistance from Pete, and many dedicated caregivers, including Elaine, and with Lorette's support from afar.

Helen loved traveling! She logged countless miles on many family trips to visit relatives in New York City, Colorado, California, and Lorette's family in the DC area. Helen toured the Allied countries of Europe on the 50th Anniversary of VE Day with Fred's 87th Infantry. Her last adventure outside the U.S. was with Lorette's family to that dear old land across the Irish Sea, including County Mayo, birthplace of her great-grandparents.

Even with her busy household, Helen served her community through many avenues. It started with her organization of the Triple Cities Mothers of Twins Club. As her children grew, her passion as volunteer continued at Christ the King School, where she, a talented artist, taught art. A patient teacher, her students learned art history, drawing and painting techniques. Many found success in their artwork. Helen's paintings and drawings still brightens the walls of the family home.

Helen loved her church. She was a long-time member of Christ the King Roman Catholic Church in Endwell. She was on Parish Council, served as a lector and enjoyed helping with the Lenten fish dinners until it closed in 2008. Since then, she had been a parishioner of St. Ambrose Church in Endicott. She also made many friends at St. Vincent de Paul Blessed Sacrament Church, which she attended after Deacon Tom was assigned there.

Helen was a life member of both the Endwell Garden Club and the Federated Garden Clubs of

Final Resting Place

Calvary Cemetery

501 Fairview Avenue

Johnson City, NY 13790