



Elizabeth Helmericks

April 17, 1925 - June 21, 2010

Longtime Durango resident Elizabeth Marie ("Betts") Helmericks died in Fort Collins on June 21, 2010. In recent years, she had suffered from Alzheimer's and generally declining health following heart surgery in 2005. She was born to George Trickel and Edith Bowness Trickel in Montrose, Colorado on April 17, 1925. She was called "Betty" while growing up, but was later known as "Betts" by friends. Betty graduated from Montrose High School in 1944. She met C.J. "Jim" Helmericks, Jr. in Montrose soon after he returned from military service in World War II. They married June 9, 1946 in Montrose and soon relocated to Tucson, Arizona where Jim attended the University of Arizona on the GI Bill. While in Tucson, their first son, C.J. III ("Jimmy") was born in 1947. Upon Jim's graduation, the young family moved to Phoenix, where twin sons Gregory and Steven were born in 1951, followed by daughter Rebecca in 1957. The family moved to Durango in 1962, settling first in the East Animas Valley, then later to the West Animas Valley, about a mile south of Honeyville. In the 1960s, Mrs. Helmericks worked as an administrative assistant at the old Pinerock School near Trimble Lane, at the San Juan Basin Health Unit, and for many years at the San Juan Federal Credit Union, now known as Southwest Colorado Federal Credit Union. When the couple divorced in 1969, Mrs. Helmericks began taking classes at Fort Lewis College, where she earned her Associate of Arts degree in 1976. She took a position in acquisitions at that time at the Fort Lewis College library, staying until her retirement in 2003 at the age of 78. She made many dear friends while

working at the college library, including Dick and Martha Gobble, John Marrinacio, John Crowder, Esther Liu, Cathy Conrad, Emily Bisio, and Becky Padilla. Roberta (Schilling) Shipps stayed in touch over the years, sending cards and greetings at holidays and birthdays. Bobbi Vagneur also provided love and critical personal care for Betts in Durango before it became necessary for her to move to Fort Collins in 2007, where son Steve and his wife Kathie assumed total responsibility for all her personal and health-related needs. Mrs. Helmericks spent her last three years in nursing facilities in Fort Collins. Betts was happy and proud to work at the Fort Lewis College library. In her 27 years there, she befriended countless students. Even after graduating, James Temte (now Air Quality Program Manager for the Southern Ute Tribe), often helped her with chores around her little house at the corner of 32nd Street and 4th Avenue in Durango. She was a loyal friend, and a sweet and generous soul. Following the death of her son, Gregory, of AIDS in 1986, Betts began to contribute time and money in support of AIDS research. She became a fierce supporter of gay and lesbian rights, and shared unconditional love and compassion with many in the Durango community. In 1988, she participated in a March on Washington, D.C. to promote increased AIDS research and to show support for those stricken with AIDS and their families. During this 1988 march, she attended the display of the entire "NAMES Project" AIDS Memorial Quilt on the Washington Mall, which included Gregory's quilt-panel, crafted earlier by family and Greg's partner, Paul Miller. Betts appeared briefly in the 1989 documentary "Common Threads: Stories From The Quilt," wherein she was shown mourning her son's death during the Washington Mall display. Later, back at Fort Lewis College, she spoke at a campus-wide AIDS awareness conference, where her first-person account of the ongoing devastation wrought by the AIDS tragedy impacted all who heard her. At peace with her self and her life, she rarely complained about personal challenges. However, she was always there when someone else needed love or a helping hand. She collected inspirational quotes and thoughts throughout her life, posting them at work or in her house,

or sharing them with family and friends. One such thought by Helen Keller seemed to sum-up her own philosophy on life: "So much has been given to me, I have no time to ponder over that which has been denied." Elizabeth Marie ("Betts") Helmericks is survived by sons Jim Helmericks of Durango (and wife Sharon), Steve Helmericks of Fort Collins (and wife Kathie), daughter Becky Welcome of Medford, Oregon, eleven grandchildren, several great grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her son, Gregory Helmericks in Los Angeles in 1986, and by her grandson Joshua Helmericks (Jim and Sharon's son) in Durango in 2007.

Tribute Wall



“ Elizabeth Helmericks

October 25, 2022 at 06:14 PM



“ I am so sorry for your loss. I didn't know your mom but, I know the sorrow over the loss of a mom. Know that your family will be in my prayers.

Blessings and peace,
Chris Hodges
Formerly of Durango, CO

Chris Hodges - June 21, 2010 at 12:00 AM



“ I never met Elizabeth and am sorry about that. From her obituary she sounds like an incredible woman, and someone that I would have enjoyed spending time with. Her unconditional love is beautiful. I have seen the pain and sadness that AIDS has brought to many families, and am thankful that people like her were around to take up the rallying cry for those infected by this disease. And her support for LGBT rights is truly beautiful. I am sure that as we celebrated our first Pride Festival in Durango on Saturday, she was looking down from the Heavens and smiling. Even in death, her generosity for our community continues. My sincere sympathy goes out to her family and friends on her passing. May she rest in peace.

Greg Weiss - June 21, 2010 at 12:00 AM

BS

“ I knew your Mom from the Pinerock Ranch School days when she worked with my Dad there. While my memories of her may be from many years ago, she made a lasting impression on me as that of a kind and gracious person. May God comfort you in your time of loss.

Bob Salyers - June 21, 2010 at 12:00 AM

LB

“ I didn't know Betts very well, but what I did know was that she was one of those people you couldn't possibly forget. She was such a caring person. She was so nice to visit with and get to know at each visit. We became friends. The other connection was that I had known Steve and Kathy many years before, when they lived in Durango. I'm so sorry for the loss of Betts. She was very special. Please know that my thoughts are with you and Betts. Laurie

Laurie Francil (formerly Bunten) - June 21, 2010 at 12:00 AM

TW

“ To Jim and Sharon and Steve and Kathie

Your mother was a remarkable woman.
What an honor it must have been to have
her as role model for what we all aspire to be while here on this
earth.

My thoughts are with you in her passing.

Terri Watson - June 21, 2010 at 12:00 AM

JD

“ Steve and Kathy,

I don't know if you remember me, Julie Deters, however, I took care of Betts when she was first helicoptered into PVHS with her little dog from Durango, back in 2005! Wow. She was an amazing patient and quickly we became best buddies. I remember watching her enjoy the bean burritos at PVH.

She was a strong woman with an indomitable soul and I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to care for her as a patient.

From reading her obituary, she lived a very full and rich life ~ with love for her family and little dog central to her life.

I am sorry for your loss. She was simply a wonderful individual with a huge heart.

I pray you are finding comfort in family, friends and fond memories during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Julie M. Deters

Julie Deters - June 21, 2010 at 12:00 AM

SW

“ *I send my condolences to the family. What a special relationship I had with Betts - both my husband, Florian, and I adored her and spent many hours over many years chatting and laughing with her. I will miss her very much.*

Shelley Walchak - June 21, 2010 at 12:00 AM

LS

“ So sorry to hear about Betts' death. I will always remember her as a beautiful, warm, caring, wise and talented woman. I have very fond memories of her. Over the years, we did get to see each other a few times. Everytime, it was alot of good conversation and laughing. She was the person who taught me how to cook bacon and eggs! (and I actually think about that when ever I do make them!) The world is a better place because of her. God be with you all.

Linda Hill Siegfried - June 21, 2010 at 12:00 AM

MG

“ Please accept our condolences on Betts' passing. I had the pleasure of getting to know Betts through work at the library and we were neighbors, too. She was a beautiful person. We have many fond memories of her, may she rest in peace.

Marge Gomez - June 21, 2010 at 12:00 AM

RD

“ Betts was a truly special soul. She was one to always turn any situation into a life lesson or find the good no matter what it was. I always envied those around Betts as a model grandma who loved and enjoyed all her children and grandchildren. She was always nonjudgemental and never wanted to see anyone be denied their rights. This is evident in her support of AIDS patients. When my daughter went to Fort Lewis I would often stop by and see Betts and she was always cooking for someone or delivering cakes to someone who needed her. Never in a bad mood but always cheery and caring. She lived a well-respected full life. The world was a better place with Betts having been in it!

Rema Dunn - June 21, 2010 at 12:00 AM

JH

“ I often would drive by Bett's place in Durango and wonder how she was doing. She was such a sweet lady. I had worked in the periodical department when she was upstairs in the library at Fort Lewis College. Whenever I would see her it was the beautiful smile she would have that would just make a person smile no matter how their day was going. She will be missed dearly but remembered forever!

Jaimie Hoffman - June 21, 2010 at 12:00 AM

YL

“ Elizabeth Helmericks

Yvonne Lashmett - June 21, 2010 at 12:00 AM