

HELEN JUDITH MACKAY SUTTON

Helen Judith Mackay was the tenth and final child of Robert and Jane Mackay. She was born in Brockville, Ontario Canada on May 18, 1921.

When the family left Ontario for Medina, New York, Helen was only three and never had any lasting memories of the move. To help her with the transition, she depended on her siblings Ralph, Lyle, Dorothy, and Jean for support. Anna became like a mother to the younger siblings. Helen in her later years reflected how Anna helped raised her through those early years.

The 1940 US Census showed her living on Crowley Street with her mother Jane and brothers Gerald, Lyle, and Ralph. Gerald was married later that year. Helen's early life was influenced by Dot, Jean, Lyle, and Ralph. How could she go wrong with those role models? Madeline often mentioned the five youngest siblings had greater freedom and liberties compared to the five oldest. Being the youngest, Helen had the opportunity to enjoy even greater freedom. While Helen didn't pick up the language often used by Lyle, she did enjoy the social and carefree life. Helen's rebellion was noted by Madeline with her behavior at the reunions. Madeline often mentioned to Helen that wearing her short pants was inappropriate and commented to her for having a beer before the meeting started. At several of the early reunions, the beer was not tapped until after the meeting. You can thank Helen for having pre-meeting beer and loosening up the dress code.

While she didn't play sports in high school, she was very supportive of her siblings' participation. She enjoyed having her brothers Lyle and Ralph at Riverside High to keep a close watch over her. This relationship continued throughout her life. Also, because she was the youngest, her age was much closer to many of her second cousins such as Ginny Clark and the McCreadys. By the time she was 20, eight of her siblings were already married.

In 1943, Helen volunteered to join the Navy Waves, a decision that would have a major impact on her life. Not only did it make her feel she was contributing to the war effort, but it greatly affected her personal life. After her basic training, Helen was assigned to the Bethesda Naval Hospital. It was also around that time that Don Sutton, from Baltimore Maryland, joined the Navy Reserves (1942) and became a Pharmacist's Mate. Don had served on several Merchant Marine ships that supported Naval operations in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. In late 1944, Don was assigned to the Bethesda Naval Hospital. Don and Helen met at a night club in the area and quickly found out they had the same interest and enjoyment of dancing. Anyone who has attended a Mackay wedding understands how their dancing would turn into a lifelong passion. On May 5th, 1945, Don and Helen got married at the Anacostia Naval Annex Chapel. They were now dance partners for life.

Following their discharges from the Navy in 1945, they returned to Buffalo. During their return they spent time with Helen's mother Jane, Dot and Jim Sarra, as well as Anna and Mac

McCready. On March 7, 1946 their first child was born. Now the family was three with Don, Helen, and Bob. A year and a half later Peggy was born on November 3, 1947. The family of four was now living on Ross Avenue with her mother Jane. Jane helped with Bob and Peggy. During this time, Don was working at Dunlop and Helen worked as a part time secretary. During this time they could often be found hanging out at Nucherino's and Manley's taverns and would often be spotted with Ginny's husband, Harry Clark. In late 1951, the Suttons would return to Don's home town of Baltimore. In January, 1952 Don was accepted into the Baltimore City Police Department and started as a Patrolman in the Northwest Precinct of the city. His career included a position as detective, assigned to the Automobile squad and eventually moving into the Homicide division. He was promoted through the ranks to become a Lieutenant and Shift Commander of the Southern district. On November 11, 1979, Don retired from the police force.

The move to Baltimore found Helen setting up home in several locations in the city until they were able to buy a home in Dundalk, Baltimore County. This would be the Sutton home from 1955 until Don retired in 1979. While Don had been busy serving the City, Helen was hired by PEMCO Corporation, a paint manufacturing plant. While this company changed hands several times, Helen maintained her job as a Purchasing Agent. Helen was also very active taking care of Bob and Peggy ensuring all their needs were met and they got to school on time. Helen was the family's chief financial officer and house cleaner; the cooking was left to Don. Don would often make premade meals that Helen only had to heat up. Family members who visited Baltimore appreciated Don's creative cooking. Helen's specialty was making tuna fish and pea casseroles, brownies, and gravy.

The sixties and seventies were exciting times for Don and Helen. In July 1965 they enjoyed hosting the wedding of their youngest child Peggy to Bob Bryant. June of 1966 saw the birth of the first grandson, Robbie. The following year came the birth of Hope, their first granddaughter on December 13, 1967. The focus was now on their expanding family. Helen enjoyed her new role as grandmother. February 14, 1969 saw the continued growth of the Sutton Clan with the marriage of Bob to Dawn Ressler. Greg, their third grandchild arrived on May 12, 1974 with the fourth, Kelly, arriving September 3, 1976. As the grandkids grew, Don and Helen were always available for babysitting and just spending time with them. While Don took care of the pool activities and Helen made sure the young ladies understood the importance of the soap operas.

They were never ones to miss a celebration. Besides Peggy and Bob, they were fortunate to attend all their grandchildren's weddings as well as getting the opportunity to enjoy their great grandchildren, Sean, Nicole, Brooke, and Brody. They looked forward to weddings and celebrations, as many in the MacKay Clan can appreciate. Don and Helen were always a center of attention with their dancing and infectious enthusiasm. As Helen often said, "there was not a party or celebration she didn't enjoy."

Unfortunately all the joy of this expanded family was disrupted in 1978 with the untimely and tragic death of Peggy. While Peggy and Bob had divorced, Bob Bryant was there to take care of Hope and Robbie. Helen stayed actively involved and was readily available for Robbie and

Hope. While the loss was difficult, they compensated by enjoying every moment with their family. To say the grandkids were spoiled is an understatement.

After their retirements in the early 80's, Don and Helen would spend more time on the open seas. This gave them the opportunity to experience seven glorious days of happy hours and dancing till late into the night. Their favorite cruise was through the Panama Canal. When home, they became actively involved in the American Legion, VFW, Moose, and Elks. One of Helen's proudest moments was when she, Don, and Bob joined the American Legion on equal footing as veterans. The adventure they enjoyed the most was traveling around the country attending the weddings of nieces and nephews, as well as their great nieces and nephews.

The MacKay Reunion was very important to Helen since for several years she was the only remaining sibling of her generation. Fortunately there were still Ginny, Roy, and Wendell whom she saw quite often while growing up. This was also the opportunity for Helen to show off her bowling skills. She looked forward to Sunday mornings, and except for the last two reunions she attended, never missed a chance to win the Peggy Sutton Titus Bowling Trophy for the female bowler on the winning team. Helen also enjoyed the water balloon toss. She looked for partners who also wanted an early elimination so they could get back to their beers.

Helen Judith Mackay Sutton passed away in her sleep on April 24th, 2006. At 85, she had lived longer than any of her siblings. Family was always very important to her. She was fortunate to have been able to watch and be involved with her children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. Anyone who had spent time around Helen understood her zest for life. On April 20th, 2012 Don passed away and would soon join his lifelong dance partner. You can rest assured they have not missed a Happy Hour or dance since.