



Elaine Florence Harkness

OCT 6, 1924 - JAN 2, 2024



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Elaine Florence Harkness

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Mrs. Elaine Florence (Allen) Harkness, age 99, joined her husband of 42 years in heaven on January 2, 2024. She passed away at Robbinswood Assisted Living Facility in Grand Haven, Michigan. Elaine was born on October 6, 1924 in Norwegian-American Hospital in Chicago, Illinois to parents Leslie Earl and Ethel Louise (Hanson) Allen. Elaine's parents divorced early in life during the Great Depression. Elaine and her younger sister Eleanor Louise (Allen) Blood spent a month in the Lydia Home Orphanage in Chicago at one point due to financial conditions. What Elaine remembered the most of that time was how she and her sister used to travel around the Chicagoland area by train alone to visit the Lincoln Zoo and other attractions when her mother was working. Later when she was growing up, Elaine lived on a farm near Morley, Michigan with her mother and sisters Eleanor and Winnie B. (Clark) Beeman. Elaine recalled her first real paying job was in Morley at the ammo factory during early WWII (about 1941). She was fired from the job when they found out she was only 17 years old. Elaine also lived for a time with her grandparents Edward Ebenhart and Nellie Matilda (Nelson) Hanson in Adrian Michigan. Elaine graduated from Adrian High School in 1942.

On her 18th birthday Elaine packed up her belongings in a suitcase and took the bus to Muskegon. (This was during WWII and she had learned from her stepfather Lester D. Clark that there were good paying jobs to be had in Muskegon). She got off the bus in Muskegon with no job or residence in sight and was hired that day to work at Continental Motors factory in downtown Muskegon and was referred to a Greek family with a room to rent.

During her employment at the Continental plant, Elaine became interested in flying airplanes and completed training to obtain her private pilot's license at Muskegon County Airport, a feat that was rare for women in the early 1940's. Also during her Continental plant employment, she became friends with Beverley J. (Harkness) Garter and her mother Hazel M. (Golwitzer) Harkness



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who both worked there. Later Elaine met the son/brother Richard James Harkness who was in the US Army at the time and eventually after WWII they were married on April 25, 1947 in Muskegon, Michigan. Elaine always wanted a large family, so she stopped working at Continental and proceeded to start a family, giving birth to seven children in nine years: Sharon, Peggy, John, James, Janet, Joseph and Julie.

Her home on Ada Avenue was open to her growing family and their friends. She kept homemade pizza and pies in the freezer for late night snacking. Her favorite color was purple. She enjoyed playing the lottery and betting on Nascar. Going out to eat was something she looked forward to and watching Lawrence Welk re-runs made her smile. She especially liked Myron Floren on the accordion. Elaine was a night owl who loved watching movies from her extensive VHS collection. She enjoyed painting and ceramics and gifted items to her children and their families. She once painted a mural on the living room wall of a branch of a tree and it was admired for many years by all who saw it. Our homes still have Nativity sets, Christmas trees, banks, and dolls she lovingly crafted. Elaine was an exceptional listener and a friend of all. The annual Harkness family reunion revolved around her birthday and year after year we gathered to celebrate her amazing life and the impact she had on generations. Her most recent birthday was no exception. Four generations of the family tree were represented. We will miss her greatly and her traits of caring, compassion, hard work and the importance of family will remain her legacy.

In addition to raising the children, Elaine also worked outside the home at various locations: Meri-lan Dairy as a waitress, El Royal Restaurant as the head cook on days, and Muskegon Regional Mental Facility as an attendant. After her husband Richard died on June 27, 1989, Elaine lived alone for about 10 years at the family home at 1037 Ada Avenue, Muskegon. She eventually moved to Pine Grove Manor, where she lived for about 20 years. It was during this time that she volunteered to help other residents with transportation to and from area stores and church, along with helping to serve noon lunch in the Manor facility cafeteria. She especially enjoyed being a greeter at First Baptist Church Sunday morning services for many years. Elaine Harkness was awarded the Outstanding Senior Award for 2001 by the Muskegon Community College Senior Advisory Board (Muskegon Chronicle dated August 17, 2001). After a fall which resulted in a broken neck. Elaine recovered and eventually moved into the Robbinswood Assisted Living Facility at Grand Haven.

Elaine is predeceased by her parents Leslie and Ethel (Hanson) Allen, husband Richard J. Harkness, sister and brother-in-law Eleanor (Chuck) L. Blood, brother-in-law Enoch (Winnie)



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Beeman, daughter Sharon (William) L. Phillips, daughter and son-in-law Peggy A. and (J. Terry) Shepard, son John W. Harkness, and grandson Jonathan Phillips. She is survived by her sister Winnie B. (Enoch) Beeman of Spring Arbor, MI, son James R. Harkness of Muskegon, daughter Janet L. (Robert) Sobish of Fruitport, son Joseph J. (Chris) Harkness of Negaunee, MI, daughter Julie M. (Pat) Sorenson of Fruitport Township and son-in-law William J. Phillips of Sparta, MI. Elaine also leaves behind 17 grandchildren and 30 great-grandchildren.

Services will be held Saturday, January 20, 2024 at 11:00 am at the First Baptist Church, 1070 S. Quarterline Road, Muskegon with the Rev. Andy Smith officiating. Visitation will be held starting one hour prior to the service and light refreshments will be provided after the services at the church. Burial will be in Sunrise Memorial Gardens in Muskegon next to her husband. Special thanks to the dedicated personnel at Robbinswood Assisted Living Facility and at Hospice of North Ottawa Community in Grand Haven Michigan for the compassionate and excellent care afforded to Elaine. Funeral planning services by Sytsema Funeral Home at 737 Apple Avenue. Suggested Memorial: Muskegon Rescue Mission.



Events

Elaine Florence Harkness

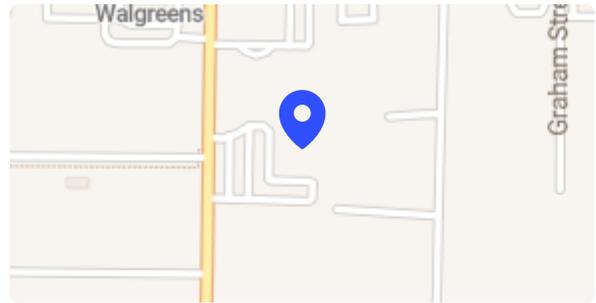
OCT 6, 1924 - JAN 2, 2024

Visitation

Saturday, January 20, 2024

10:00 AM - 11:00 AM ET

First Baptist Church
1070 South Quarterline Rd., Muskegon, MI 49442

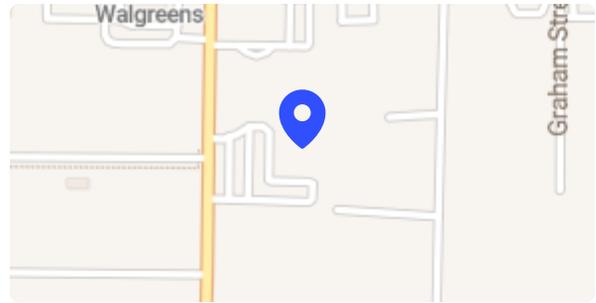


Memorial Service

Saturday, January 20, 2024

11:00 AM ET

First Baptist Church
1070 South Quarterline Rd., Muskegon, MI 49442



Cemetery Details

Sunrise Memorial Gardens
2188 Remembrance Dr, Muskegon MI 49442





Tribute Wall

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Anonymous sent a Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum to the Harkness family.



January 17 at 12:10 PM



Jim Harkness posted:

I feel so fortunate to have had the parents I had. Must be what it feels like to hit the parent lotto jackpot!!! They complemented each other and made each of us kids feel special. They both worked hard and provided for us the best they could. They would work different shifts so one parent was usually home with us. It was sometimes crowded in the house with all six of the kids but it never seemed to bother them too much. Meal times were an exercise in space utilization- we had a built-in breakfast nook and the parents would sit on the end of the two bench seats so we could not escape until the meal was done. And my Mom was a great cook so we ate well. I remember her pizzas, which were Chef Boy Ardee box kits that were loaded with all kinds of extras Mom would add, like sausage, peperoni and cheeses. She would cook a couple right away and put the additional 4-6 pizzas in the freezer for another day. Also remember her goulash that she called spaghetti, her potato salad, her scalloped potatoes and the home made pies and cakes. I used to get annoyed occasionally when I could not get in the single bathroom in a timely manner to go when one of my sisters were in there doing what sisters do monopolizing the space, but now I look back with only fond memories of those days. Sometimes I would get lucky and Mom would be home to appeal to in order to get the bathroom cleared out. Some of the things I remember most about my Mom: made me feel special. My first memory of being away from home I was about 3 years old or thereabouts and I was having respiratory issues so I had to check into Hackley Hospital overnight to get my tonsils and adenoids out so I could breath again. I just remember being scared to be away from home, but I got over it when my parents bought me a double cowboy six shooter holster set! I also got to have ice cream there too. Mom also took me to get an ice cream cone one time down on Apple Avenue, just me, and we both got our favorite butter pecan cone. Why that one time sticks in my head I have no idea (I think it was because she just took me alone). She saved up S&H Green Stamp books and got a chess set for me which I played all the time at that age (which I still have today but have not played in years). She was able to get us kids part-time summer jobs when school was out where she worked at El Royal Restaurant and also picking blueberries in the fields nearby. I worked for the owners at the time Marge & Mel Johnson and they were great to work for, but best of all I got to have my Mom cook me my favorite perch sandwich with orange pop for lunch. Mom had her hands full between us kids and working but I don't remember her ever being mad at us for long for the trouble we always seemed to get in - she would just sound so disappointed when we knew we messed up and lecture us for a while. What a great example of a Mom she was. See you soon Mom. I love you.
Jim

January 4 at 10:42 AM



Tribute Wall

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MG

Melissa G. planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Elaine.



January 7 at 1:23 PM

MG

Melissa Girling posted:

I have truly fond memories of going to Grandma and Grandpas house when I was a kid. Not just for Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve, but those are the times I remember the most. The playroom in the basement, full of toys, and of course the pool table but that was only a special privilege once you got old enough, and only if the family wasn't using it as a dining table! There were a lot of us back then (cousins, Aunts and Uncles) and it was such fun. I remember Grandma being the quiet one, but also the one who made the pies...cherry, apple and mincemeat. Sometimes I would sit in the nook while she cooked, or I would help descale the shrimp. I really wish I remember more about what she said, I am left with just a memory of her calm presence in a super busy house. Knowing now how she always wanted a big family, I bet she really cherished those times. I never heard her raise her voice or say a bad word about anyone. Rest in peace, Grandma.

January 7 at 1:14 PM

CH

Christine Harkness posted:

Elaine was my mother in law. I couldn't have asked for a better one! After Thanksgiving dinner, the men would head to the cabin and Mom and I would stay up late watching movies and visiting. She was an inspiration to me. She was amazingly resilient and independent. When the family came to our home in Wisconsin for the weekend, she helped me clean up and we spent an hour washing dishes while having the best conversation. One of the serving bowls got chipped and I keep it out as a reminder of that day. Her smile and laugh will follow us for the rest of our days.

January 5 at 4:42 AM

DW

Douglas L Witte posted:

I grew up three houses away from the Harkness family on Ada St. and used to see Elaine at Arby's on Apple when she was living at Pine Grove. She was always with a group of other ladies and I enjoyed seeing them. She was always nice to me and after seeing her obituary, I am even more impressed with this lady. Rest in Peace Elaine.

January 5 at 4:36 AM



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Anonymous sent a Florist Choice Bouquet to the Harkness family.



January 5 at 3:03 AM



Hazel Garter Raddatz posted:

My sweet wonderful Aunt Elaine Harkness spread kindness and caring wherever she went. I loved spending time with my cousins at their house on Ada Street. There was always something going on. She was such a hard worker and left that trait to her wonderful children. I am so proud of them for the way they cared for their mom. May she rest in peace with her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

January 4 at 5:07 PM



Anonymous sent a Gracious Lavender Basket to the Harkness family.



January 4 at 3:34 PM



Crystal, Tyler, Jacob & Dylan Vegliando planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Elaine.



January 4 at 3:34 PM



Sytsema Funeral & Cremation Services shared an album called **Memories Album**.



January 4 at 10:42 AM



Media

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Sytsema Funeral & Cremation Services shared 3 photos to the Memories Album album.

January 4 at 10:42 AM





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Elaine by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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