



Helen Jelisaveta Kirby

April 21, 1930 - July 12, 2025

Helen Jelisaveta Kirby (née Vitkovich), 95, of Valparaiso, IN, passed away on July 12, 2025, leaving behind a legacy woven with love, resilience, and generosity. Born on April 21, 1930, in Gary, Indiana to Bosiljka and Marko Vitkovich, Helen was a lifelong member of St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church in Merrillville, Indiana—a place she served with devotion and joy.

The enduring memory of Helen Kirby was her ability to persevere. After suddenly losing her husband Eli Kirby in 1978, Helen raised four successful daughters—Betsy C.H.A, Dr. Cindy, Tammy Esq., C.P.A, and Zorine R.N.—with a steady hand and unwavering faith. Her sacrifices catapulted her daughters to achieve unimaginable accomplishments. Sixty cent-an-hour jobs did not stop her. Sleepless nights did not slow her. She was a believer in education, sending her daughters to college and later attending university herself in her 50's at IUN, and in her 70's at the University of Pittsburgh. Every day was Helen's favorite day to welcome anyone into her home. Her home was famous for hugs, hearty meals, and the kind of listening that made people feel cherished. Her kindness was active, not abstract—whether serving her church, mentoring friends, or simply telling a stranger, “Your child is wonderful.” She found joy in uplifting others with her disarming wit and empathetic heart. Helen served her church through countless roles, including recording secretary and on the nominating and cookbook committees for the St. Sava Sisters' Circle. She was also a mother's helper at camp, bingo kitchen volunteer, honorary choir member, and participated in various

fundraising campaigns including Serb Fest volunteer up until her passing! Left to cherish her memory are her loving sons-in-law, Jerry Davis and Rudy Labovic; her loving sister, Zorine (+V. Rev. Stavrophor Vasilije) Sokolovic also survives her. Helen was preceded in death by sisters: Elaine (Dr. Dusan) Zeremsky, Nancy (Gilbert) Vuyakovich and brother, Tim Vitkovich; nephews, Mark Zeremsky, Dale Vuyakovich.

Baba (grandmother) Helen found great joy in having grandchildren: Ilija, Dr. Juji (namesake Jelisaveta), Marko (Tereza), Bosiljka, Lucija, and Stana; and great grandson, Bruno—all of whom carry forward her spirit of empathy and strength. And all of whom she encouraged to honor their faith and to obtain higher education to provide for their own security and independence.

Helen (Teta Jeka) will be missed dearly by nieces: Donnelle Zeremsky, Luanne Vuyakovich, Mirjana (Milan) Damljanovic, and nephew, Toso, (Tanja) Sokolovic and their families as well as relatives, Kumovi, friends in the US, Serbia and Canada. Helen's brilliant mind, quick wit, and open heart made her unforgettable. She chose faith and love, and in doing so, built a life that lifted everyone around her. A visitation will be held on Saturday, July 19, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. until the time of the funeral service at 12 p.m. directly at St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church, 9191 Mississippi Street, Merrillville, IN. Rev. Marko Matic officiating. Luncheon immediately following funeral service at St. Sava Pavillion. Interment Calumet Park Cemetery. Flowers or donations may be made to St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church in Helen's name. Burns Funeral Home & Crematory, Crown Point, IN, entrusted with arrangements. www.burnsfuneral.com

Cemetery Details

Calumet Park Cemetery

2305 W. 73rd Ave.
Merrillville, IN 46410

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 19. 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM (cst)

St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church
9191 Mississippi St
Merrillville, IN 46410

Funeral Service

JUL 19. 12:00 PM (cst)

St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church
9191 Mississippi St
Merrillville, IN 46410

Tribute Wall



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Helen Jelisaveta Kirby.



July 18, 2025 at 02:13 PM



“ Jim Djuric and Family purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Helen Jelisaveta Kirby.



Jim Djuric and Family - July 18, 2025 at 01:42 PM



“ Jim Djuric and Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Helen Jelisaveta Kirby.

Jim Djuric and Family - July 18, 2025 at 01:42 PM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Helen Jelisaveta Kirby.



July 18, 2025 at 12:25 PM

DF

“ *David and Suzette Boyd Family purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Helen Jelisaveta Kirby.*



David and Suzette Boyd Family - July 18, 2025 at 11:15 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Helen Jelisaveta Kirby.*



July 18, 2025 at 11:03 AM

LP

“ *Dear Kirby girls, what wonderful memories of Helen and your family. May she rest in peace. Leslie Bartolomei Poplon*

Leslie Poplon - July 18, 2025 at 09:25 AM

FF

“ *From The Williams Family purchased the Fairest of All for the family of Helen Jelisaveta Kirby.*



From The Williams Family - July 18, 2025 at 08:47 AM

SC

“ Sending our deepest condolences to all the Kirby family. Our thoughts and prayers are with you. From Strato Capetanakis and family, your Canadian cousins.

Strato Capetanakis - July 17, 2025 at 10:26 PM



“ Fairest of All was purchased for the family of Helen Jelisaveta Kirby.



July 17, 2025 at 05:04 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Helen Jelisaveta Kirby.

July 17, 2025 at 05:04 PM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Helen Jelisaveta Kirby.



July 17, 2025 at 04:42 PM

CS

“ *Cathy Sibo purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Helen Jelisaveta Kirby.*



Cathy Sibo - July 17, 2025 at 01:45 PM

MD

“ *Sending my deepest condolences to the entire Kirby and Vitkovic families. Remembering the good times from the good old days. Dear Helen rest in peace. Vjecnaja Pamjat! Mary Ann Eleff Djankovich*



MARY ANN DJANKOVICH - July 16, 2025 at 02:23 PM

JD

“ *Our Condolences to the entire Kirby Family. Such an Amazing Lady with Such an Amazing Life. VJECNAJA PAMJAT. May her Memory Be Eternal. Jovan & Danica Djokic Rotonda West, Florida*

Jovan Djokic - July 16, 2025 at 11:08 AM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Helen Jelisaveta Kirby.*



July 15, 2025 at 03:28 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Helen Jelisaveta Kirby.*



July 15, 2025 at 02:23 PM