



Helen Marie Sparks

October 8, 1937 - November 1, 2025

On October 8, 1937, the world welcomed Helen Marie Nedrow, a tiny but determined baby who came into life prematurely - so small and fragile that her parents kept her warm on the open door of the family's oven. Against the odds, she survived, and in one of life's ironies, that humble act of care likely saved her eyesight; at the time, premature infants in hospitals were often placed in oxygen-rich incubators that caused blindness. Her resilience from that first moment became a defining theme throughout her life.

On June 4, 1955, she married the love of her life, William R. Sparks, beginning a partnership that would last 50 years. Together they raised eight children born over the span of 17 years creating a legacy built on love, laughter, and family firsts.

Helen broke barriers as the first female postmaster in Indian Head, PA. She carried that title with pride and a sharp wit. When anyone called her "postmistress," she'd quickly reply, "I'm not sleeping with the postmaster - I am the postmaster." Her strength and sense of humor made her a role model for her children and a respected figure in her community.

Life in the Sparks household was full of warmth, determination, and fun. When she decided it was time for a home addition and her husband - a contractor - hadn't quite gotten around to it, she took a sledgehammer to the kitchen wall herself. Her children watched wide eyed as she started. She turned to Debby and said "Finish your breakfast and change, you are going to help" Her kids were always her co-conspirators. Bill didn't have much choice after that; the

new addition went up soon after. It was just one of many examples of her persistence, independence, and spirited approach to life.

Together, she and Bill shared countless card nights with friends and family where laughter, camaraderie, and a bit of friendly competition filled the room. Their home was always open, their table always full, and their hearts always focused on family.

That love extended through generations. Helen was the proud mother of eight, grandmother to fifteen, and great-grandmother to thirteen and she never let anyone forget how proud she was of them all. Family vacations, especially to Oglebay, West Virginia, became treasured traditions. Dozens of family members gathered for shenanigans, laughter, and late-night games, carrying on the Sparks spirit of togetherness that she and William created.

In recent years, that same joyful spark shone during family game nights. Even as her health declined, she insisted on joining in especially when the family revived the beloved Keno table from the Saltlick Township Fireman's Fair. Whether seated in her wheelchair or standing tall to take her turn, she was the heart of the game and the soul of the family. Everyone cheered when she would win.

Helen lived her life with love, courage, humor, and grit - qualities she passed down to every generation that followed. Her legacy will continue in the laughter around the table, the strength of her family's bond, and the stories that will be told for years to come. She was, and always will be, the heart of the Sparks family.

Helen is survived by her daughters, Debby Ernesty (Ern), Monica Crocetti, Steph Huey (Barry), and Trisha Sparks (Eric Whirlow); her daughters-in-law, Lynda Sparks and Anna Sparks; her beloved grandchildren, Michael Ernesty (Mia), Nikki Shearer (Brian), Tomasina Crocetti (Randall), Frank Crocetti (Noelle), Maddy Franko (Andrew), Elizabeth Arndt (John), Andrew Sparks, Jeremy Sparks (Melissa), Justin Sparks (Shannon), Jeanna Gross (Nick), Sheena Sparks (Tiffany), Cody Huey, Corwin Sparks (Shelby), and Stella Sparks; and her cherished great-grandchildren, Cole Shearer, Bryn Ansell

(Ethan), Kace Shearer, Maria Franko, Ollie Arndt, Lily Arndt, Abbey Sparks, Chase Sparks, Jake Sparks, Grace Sparks, Hannah Gross, Eli Gross, and Lucas Gross.

In addition to her immediate family, Helen leaves behind a vast network of extended family and friends - including in-laws, nieces, nephews, and so many others whose lives she touched deeply. She was also blessed with an extraordinary caregiver, Dana Ritenour, who became like another daughter to her and a cherished member of the family. She is also survived by her last living sibling, John Nedrow.

She was welcomed into peace by her tribe who preceded her in death - her loving husband, William R. Sparks; her children, Trudy Sparks, Tom Sparks, Jim Sparks, and Tim Sparks; and her grandson, Nash Huey.

In lieu of flowers bring some dollars to play a round of Keno or bring a story to fill our hearts.

Family and friends will be received Wednesday from 12 :00 PM to 8:00 PM in the Mark C. Brooks Funeral Home Inc., at the corner of Route 711 and 146 Municipal Building Rd. Melcroft (724-455-2310) where Prayers of Transfer will be held Thursday at 9:20 AM followed by a Funeral Mass at 10:00 AM in St. Raymond of the Mountains R.C. Church, 164 School House Lane, Donegal, PA. 15628, with Rev. Matthew Udoh as celebrant. A Committal Service and interment will follow in the St. Raymond's Cemetery, Champion. To leave a message or send condolences please visit our website at www.brooksfhmelcroft.com

Cemetery Details

St. Raymond Cemetery

164 School House Lane
Donegal, PA 15628

Previous Events

Receiving of Family and Friends

NOV 5. 12:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Mark C. Brooks Funeral Home, Inc.
146 Municipal Building Rd
Melcroft, PA 15462
(724) 455-2310
<https://www.brooksfhmelcroft.com>

Prayers of Transition

NOV 6. 9:20 AM (ET)

Mark C. Brooks Funeral Home, Inc.
146 Municipal Building Rd
Melcroft, PA 15462
(724) 455-2310
<https://www.brooksfhmelcroft.com>

Funeral Mass

NOV 6. 10:00 AM (ET)

St. Raymond of the Mountain R.C. Church
164 School House Lane
Donegal, PA 15628

Committal Service

NOV 6 (ET)

St. Raymond Cemetery
164 School House Lane
Donegal, PA 15628

The Committal Service will follow directly after the Funeral Mass at St. Raymond's Cemetery

Tribute Wall

PG

“ *Tomasina ~ Please accept my heartfelt condolences on your Gram. I believe I met her once when you had a contingency of family at your place, and we had such a good time together. One of life's pleasures when paths cross. That afternoon will remain in my memory, please pass on my best wishes to everybody else.*

Patrick Gilligan - November 05, 2025 at 11:04 AM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Helen Marie Sparks.*



November 04, 2025 at 11:22 PM

TP

“ *The Prewitt's purchased the Ocean Breeze Spray for the family of Helen Marie Sparks.*



The Prewitt's - November 04, 2025 at 06:48 PM

PG

“ *Patrick G. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Helen Marie Sparks.*

Patrick G. - November 04, 2025 at 12:06 PM

EB

“ *Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine.*

Elizabeth Brown - November 03, 2025 at 07:02 PM

SF

“ *SILVIS FAMILY purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Helen Marie Sparks.*



SILVIS FAMILY - November 03, 2025 at 01:31 PM

KM

“ *I've never witnessed a family that radiated more love than the Sparks, and that love was anchored in Helen. I loved hearing the stories of game nights, family vacations, postmaster lore, and more. T, Eric, and the greater Sparks family you are truly in our thoughts. If you listen hard enough you might hear "Gotta go with the Hot numbers!". Sending all of my love.*

Kristy M - November 03, 2025 at 09:27 AM



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Helen Marie Sparks.*



November 03, 2025 at 09:08 AM