



## Helen Byrne Lau

January 22, 2023

Helen Byrne Lau of Port Washington passed away on January 22, 2023, at the age of 85, her body giving way to illness brought on by metastatic Merkel cell carcinoma. Helen was born on January 3, 1938, the daughter of Mary (Fox) and Daniel Byrne of Cambria Heights. She graduated from Andrew Jackson High School and, after a short stint as a secretary with Holland America Lines, enrolled in Bellevue's school of nursing in Manhattan – the start of a nursing career that would span more than 50 years. In 1962 she married Joseph Lau, who would be at her side for the rest of her life. The couple moved to Quantico, Virginia, where Joe served for two years in the Marines – the only time that either of them lived outside of the New York area. They returned to the city, settled in Cambria Heights, and had their two children, Chris and Nichole. In 1974 they bought a house in Port Washington that would end up being the family home for going on half a century. After a long stint at Elmhurst Hospital, Helen began work at the SUNY/Old Westbury Student

Health Center. Taking advantage of the tuition break for employees, she returned to school, where she flourished, graduating at the top of her class in 1986 with a BS in psychology. Over the next two decades she worked as a psych nurse in various Long Island hospitals (St. Francis, Winthrop, Glen Cove, Mercy) before finishing her career back at Old Westbury. She retired at the age of 80.

Helen will be remembered for her vivacious spirit and her joie de vivre. With her twinkling eyes and lilting voice, her personality filled a room. She could be both passionate in her beliefs and humbly openminded. (She was one of the rare Americans who could say she cast votes for both Barry Goldwater and Bernie Sanders.) She had a big, generous heart – her kindness and caring went beyond immediate family to encompass beloved nieces, nephews, in-laws, god daughters, and friends. She had an instinctive sympathy for anyone who might be in need of companionship. Over the years, acquaintances of all stripes – neighbors, co-workers, exchange students, friends of friends – were welcomed in her home with genuine warmth.

Helen was preceded in death by her three siblings, Bobby, Regina, and Ronnie. Her spirit lives on in those she left behind: her loving husband of 60 years, Joseph; children Chris (wife Barbara) and Nichole (husband Matthew); grandchildren Elisabet, Keira, and Torin; nieces Madelyn,

Liz, Laura, and Regina; god daughters Sara and Vicky; in-laws spanning three generations; and the many good friends she thought of as family. Cremation was Private

# Tribute Wall



“ I only met Helen a few times. I loved visiting Port Washington. It felt like such a warm and loving home. Helen made me feel super welcome, part of the family more than a far away European friend. I m sure she will be greatly missed. I wish the family a lot of strength and eachothers support in carrying this burden. May all the good memories of her help with that.

Jeroen

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**Jeroen Bakker** - January 30, 2023 at 04:37 AM

EW

“ I will miss your visits to California, Aunt Helen! Your energy and positive spirit were infectious! I smiled a lot when I was with you when you visited Madelyn. Hugs to the family. - Ellen of Escondido

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**Ellen Weller** - January 27, 2023 at 09:12 PM

SJ

“ Every memory I have of Helen is filled with happiness and smiles, she was full of compassion, joy and love, not to mention a fantastic sense of humour! Her love of family was her everything, she will be missed every single day.



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**Sara Jennings** - January 27, 2023 at 01:53 PM