



Gloria Handley

March 25, 1949 - January 19, 2015
Paw Paw, MI

LIFE STORY / OBITUARY

All who knew Gloria Handley would agree that she was the heartbeat of wherever she was. She was passionate, lively, and vibrant with just the right amount of spunk mixed in. One never needed to wonder what Gloria was thinking as she didn't shy away from speaking her mind, and her independent spirit was her constant companion. The selfless generosity she willingly gave to others was unmatched as she lived to serve those around her whether in her work, in her home, or in the community she loved. A more devoted mother would be hard to find, and things only got better when grandchildren came along. Although life was not without trials for Gloria, she was courageous with a fighting spirit that never grew dull. She leaves behind a priceless collection of memories that will be cherished for years to come.

With the end of WWII in 1945, the latter part of the decade found America making the transition to being a nation at peace once again. Because the baby boom was underway the new housing market couldn't keep up with the demand for new homes, and the nation was poised for a time of great prosperity. Amidst this eventful time was the year 1949 that was filled with great joy for a young couple as they welcomed the baby girl they named Gloria into their hearts and home. Her birth was a stressful time, however, as she was born prematurely and not expected to make it. In this way, Gloria was a fighter right from the start. She spent several weeks in an incubator, but she went on to thrive. During this time, she was given the nickname "Mert" short for Myrtle, the nurse who spent day and night caring for her.

Raised in the family home in the Paw Paw and Lawton area, Gloria was a young girl of her generation. She was the fourth of five children in her family, and when she was only three years old her parents divorced. Gloria was a student at local schools whose high school years found her at Paw Paw High School. She was part of the first class to attend school in the new building, and in addition to holding down her studies Gloria was a social butterfly, as she worked part-time at "The Root Beer Stand". She went on to graduate in 1967.

New and exciting changes were in store for Gloria when she met the young man who would change the course of her life forever. He was a young man who had just returned from serving Vietnam. His name was Henry Franken, and after a brief courtship they were married in May of 1968. Just a short time later they were blessed with the birth of their son, Scott, when Gloria was a young woman of 19. Although their marriage ended in divorce after two years, she was forever grateful for the son they shared.

As a single mother Gloria worked hard. She held down three jobs including at Jewel Foods in Kalamazoo, as the Deli Manager and as a waitress at The Home Bar in Kalamazoo, and at other odd jobs that she found here and there. She was also deeply devoted to raising her son, and both her sister and niece also helped in his upbringing.

Big changes were in store for Gloria again when she met and later married David Handley in the late 1970s. Together they had a daughter, Jessica, whom they both adored. They bought Gloria's dream home, a mansion in Paw Paw that was built in the 1870's and located next to the old school. Gloria loved that house, and she always referred to herself as a "domestic engineer" as she loved decorating and rearranging everything to give it a fresh feel. Because David owned Handley Tree Service he seemed to know everyone including people who could help with the restoration. The beautiful mansion was part of the Historic Home Tour which Gloria was very proud of. Gloria loved flowers and took great care in planting them around the yard. She also liked her red bud trees in the backyard, and with a double corner lot she had a lot of room to grow the things she loved. Every Halloween she dressed up as a witch to pass out candy. Word traveled quickly that this home passed out full-size candy bars! Gloria and David were married for over 25 years before separating and going their own ways.

One of the things Gloria loved most was cooking for her family, and she cooked just about everything, too. She never wrote down any recipes, and she always cooked from the heart. Among her specialties were her beef and noodles, lasagna, and Jell-O cakes, however, what she was most famous for was making stuff from this and that. In fact, Gloria was famous for saying that the dish she prepared for dinner that night "what goes in it!" Her children's friends were always welcome in their home, especially since they were right next to the school, and of course they never left Gloria's home hungry. She also loved entertaining, and when people were over she wanted to be "The Hostess with the Mostest!". Over the past ten years she stated that her cooking wasn't as good as usual, however, no one agreed with her.

Throughout her life Gloria was a bustle of activity. For years she played softball and bowled, primarily with girlfriends from Jewel, and she was a talented billiards player as well. Gloria was a decent bowler, but it was mostly all about fun with friends, which usually included her famous whistle and contagious laugh when a strike was thrown! With a natural talent for arranging flowers she worked part-time as a florist in Paw Paw for a time, and in the early nineties she worked as an RN Aid at Lakeview Nursing Home in Lawton. Gloria loved mushroom hunting, and at times she found some in her yard but she also went mushroom hunting up North. She traveled some including trips to Mexico and California to visit family, which were great trips as she loved all things about the ocean, water, and sunbathing. Gloria enjoyed hitting up garage sales and antiquing for treasures for her house or to add to her collections of little chairs, bells, dolls, and baskets. Later in life Gloria was thrilled to become a grandmother, and she loved nothing more than spoiling her grandchildren rotten whether it was tea parties with the girls, baking chocolate chip cookies with the boys, sitting with them on the chair swing, or pulling them in the wagon.

All who knew Gloria would agree that she was truly extraordinary. She was quick to remind others that life was short and loved to brighten their day as well. Gloria was generous with both her time and her resources, and a friend of hers was a friend for life. Although she had struggles, she felt blessed. Gloria told the best stories, and her sense of humor was contagious.

Empathetic, compassionate, and giving, Gloria Handley has been described as a survivor who made her own way. She cherished being a mother and grandmother, and although she accomplished much of which to be proud it was her family who was her greatest source of pride and joy. Creative, fun loving, and driven, Gloria was truly beautiful on the inside and out. Her legacy will remain alive through all those who were blessed to feel her touch.

Sadly, on January 19, 2015 she died unexpectedly at her home. Members of her family include 2 children: Scott (Tassey) Handley and Jessica Handley; 3 grandchildren: Dylan, Samantha and Tzila; 4 siblings: Valerie, Paula, Debbie, Carol and Michael and many nieces and nephews. Services will be held Tuesday, 11:00 AM at the Life Story Funeral Home, Betzler & Thompson-Paw Paw, 60900 M-40; 657-3870 where visitation will begin at 10:00AM. A reception will follow the service in the funeral home. Please visit Gloria's personal web page at www.lifestorynet.com, where you can archive a favorite memory or photo and sign her online guestbook before coming to the funeral home. Memorial donations may be to Gryphon Place.



VISITATION

Tuesday, January 27, 2015
10:00 AM to 11:00 AM EST
Betzler Life Story Funeral Homes
Paw Paw Location
60900 Michigan 40
Paw Paw, MI 49079
(269) 657-3870

SERVICE

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11:00 AM EST
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Paw Paw Location
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A reception will follow the service at the funeral home.

CONTRIBUTIONS

At the family's request memorial contributions are to be made to those listed below. Please forward payment directly to the memorial of your choice.

Gryphon Place
1104 South Westnedge Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49008
(269) 381-4357

