

EPITAPH

On April 19, 2012, while the transcripts of the oral history were still under my review, Helen Miller Rosenthal died unexpectedly at age 83 while taking her customary afternoon nap in the retirement community where we had then lived for the past almost two years. She had passed her annual physical examination just two weeks earlier and, that very morning, had performed her customary fitness center routine and fulfilled her weekly volunteer assignment. Thus, her death, apparently due to heart failure, came as a decided shock to family and fellow residents of the retirement community alike.

A week later a memorial service, attended by well over 200 persons, was held for Helen at the Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church, of which she had been a member for over a half century and a teacher in its School of Religion for 38 years. The minister delivered a eulogy that recounted in some detail Helen's many extraordinary accomplishments as an educator of children both at the church and at the pre-school where she had served as both director and teacher over a long period of time. The eulogy was followed by the reflections of two of Helen's children and one grandchild. In addition, another grandchild contributed a piece on his cello that Helen had heard him play at a church service the Sunday before she died. It was a truly moving service that I shall retain in mind for the rest of my life.

Helen's ashes are to be interred in the Arlington National Cemetery, to be eventually joined by mine.

As I read over the transcripts of the oral history in the wake of her death, it occurred to me that I had not adequately set forth therein how accomplished Helen was and how important a part of my life she was during the course of a marriage that spanned over 60 and a half years.

Although the possessor of a law degree obtained with high honors in an era when few women embarked on such an enterprise, Helen chose to devote her life instead to raising her own four children and educating hundreds if not thousands of other children. The deluge of expressions of esteem and affection that following her death were received from the parents of those children is a reflection of the regard in which she was held. And words cannot adequately describe the support and comfort that I obtained from her during our life together. She was the Rock of Gibraltar in our marriage and the principal source of my enjoyment of life.

I have often heard it said that the overriding benefit of obtaining admission to the Yale Law School is the opportunity it provides to obtain a first-class legal education at a most prestigious institution. In my case it was otherwise. I would have obtained precisely the same educational benefit had I elected to attend instead the Harvard Law School, to which I had also been admitted. Had I made that election, however, Helen and I would most likely never have crossed paths. Thus, for me, the significance of my choice of Yale far transcends the LLB degree that was bestowed upon me in June 1951, a matter of just months before, as the outcome of our meeting at that school, Helen and I were married.

Farewell my beloved Helen and my forever gratitude for all of the joy that you brought to my life.

May 2012