



Barbara Lea Helmle

September 7, 1934 - May 9, 2025

Barbara Lea (Ahrens) Helmle, age 90, of Bradley, passed away Friday, May 9, 2025 at Miller Healthcare Center in Kankakee, surrounded by love and family.

She was born September 7, 1934 in Kankakee, the daughter of Harry Barton & Pansy Martinson Ahrens.

Barbara was a firm believer in kindness and patience, frequently volunteering at her grandchildren's schools. She loved a big bowl of oatmeal in the afternoon as well as tending to her tulip and daffodil garden, reading, listening to the Prairie Home Companion and classical music on the radio, swimming, going on walks, and, most of all, grabbing a cheeseburger with a side of bacon at Ryan's Pier with her loved ones. In her earlier years she loved traveling with family, and was especially fond of her trips to California.

She attended St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Kankakee.

Surviving is one son, Steven Helmle & Rony Velasquez of Los Angeles, CA; two daughters, Laurie & Richard (Helmle) Hill of Brazil, IN and Amy (Helmle) Verdoza of Kankakee; five grandchildren, Natalia Verdoza, Felipe Verdoza, Jason Miller, James Hill, and David Hill; and several great-grandchildren.

Barbara is preceded in death by her parents; and one sister, Dr. Dolores F. Ahrens.

Cremation rites have been accorded.

Private inurnment will be held at Mound Grove Gardens in Kankakee.

Memorials may be made to the Alzheimer's Association.

Arrangements by Clancy-Gernon-Hertz Funeral Home in Kankakee.

Cemetery Details

Mound Grove Gardens Cemetery

1000 N. Greenwood
Kankakee, IL 60901
(815) 933-6726

Tribute Wall

SH

“ Friday Night, May 9, 2025, my best friend, teacher, mentor, confidant...My Mom... took her final breath, making it the last in a long string of quiet goodbyes we've endured with the evil disease of Alzheimer's. Watching her fade, piece by piece, was heartbreaking—the memories slipping, the essence of who she was slowly disappearing. But through it all, love remained. Love was stronger than the forgetting, stronger than the disease. She lost her words, lost her memories, forgot our names, but still knew we were "her people", she felt safe with us, loved us, loved by us. As I say goodbye for the last time, I hold onto that love, knowing it never fades. My heart is broken, my sadness profound, but I know Mom is healed, happy, whole and off on her most excellent next adventure
❤️❤� I love you Mom!

Steven Helmle - June 01, 2025 at 11:52 PM

MM

“ I remember your mom as a frequent visitor of the Bradley Library. She was usually with a student to tutor but also to find a good book. She was such a sweet lady & I enjoyed talking with her. She helped to make our community a better place. My condolences to her loved ones.

Michelle Meier - May 23, 2025 at 08:31 AM

HU

“ Holly Jo Upton lit a candle in memory of Barbara Lea Helmle



Holly Jo Upton - May 21, 2025 at 05:36 AM

HU

I met this beautiful woman many years ago, she stayed the same person to the end. She is truly missed.

Holly Jo Upton - May 21, 2025 at 05:38 AM

SP

“ *I am so sorry for the loss of your Mom. Mom's are so special. May she rest in peace. Big hugs!*

Sally Pasteris - May 13, 2025 at 07:48 PM