



Janna Helmers

March 12, 1920 - August 29, 2015

Janna Helmers, 95, of Iowa Falls, passed away Saturday, August 29, 2015 at Grand JiVante in Ackley. Funeral services will be 11:00 am Friday, September 4, 2015 at the Bethany Lutheran Church in Iowa Falls. Burial will be at the Oak Hill Cemetery, Parkersburg. Visitation will be one hour prior to services on Friday at the church. Woodley Funeral Home, LLC of Iowa Falls is caring for Janna and her family. 641-648-7700.

Janna was born on March 12, 1920, in Rysum, Germany, daughter of Roelf and Hinderika Kirchhoff. Janna was baptized and confirmed in the Evangelical Reformed Church. She received her education at the parochial school in Rysum. Janna's loving family included her parents, five brothers, and one sister. Political and economic tensions during this time disrupted her childhood through young adult years. As a young person subjected to circumstances beyond her control, Janna was swept into harsh pre-war conditions and the terrifying war years. The loss of family, including her brother, Rolf, brother-in-law, Bernhard, and friends during the war gave her an early awareness of the hardships life can bring.

Janna met her future husband, Henry Helmers, after the war through letter writing with German Americans in Iowa who were sending family and friends in Germany care packages. The pen pal relationship she had with Henry developed into a marriage proposal. They were married in Ostrhauderfehn, Henry's hometown, on June 25, 1949. Following the wedding, Henry returned to Parkersburg, Iowa. Janna came later in 1950. Together they worked and saved to purchase a farm in Grundy County, Iowa, near Reinbeck still farmed today by her son, Roy. Janna taught herself the English language and farm management skills while working with her husband.

On June 24, 1964, Janna became a widow when Henry was killed in a farming accident. She made the difficult decision to stay in this country and continue the farming operation by herself. After retirement from farming, Janna helped take care of her grandsons. She was very goal driven and was willing to work hard to make those goals a reality.

Janna always cherished her Ostfriesen heritage. She often spoke her native “Platt Deutsch”, and followed the strict, orderly pattern of life in which she was raised. Her strong Ostfriesen heritage helped uphold her during the hardships she experienced. Also true to her new homeland, Janna did what was proper and necessary to be a good citizen of the United States. She was proud to fly the Red, White and Blue.

Janna was proud of her family and wished only the best for them, both those here and those residing in Ostfriesland. She cherished her friends and enjoyed sharing “tea time” with them. She received great joy from raising flowers and making floral arrangements. She said, “Flowers represent love.”

Janna is survived by her daughter, Nancy (Magnus) Stiner, her son, Roy (Diann) Helmers, three grandchildren, David, Daniel, and Derek; three step-grandchildren, Glynda, Jeremy, and Alexa; great-granddaughter, Cora; two step-great grandchildren, Drew and Penelope; and many nieces and nephews in Germany.

She was preceded in death by her parents, brothers, Jan (Grietje), Freerk (Freerkje), Rolf, Hinrich (Antje), and Hannes (Ebeline) Kirchhoff and sister Grietje (Bernard) Weerts, two nephews, Rolf-Bernhard Weerts and Heinrich Kirchhoff and one niece, Johanne Mentjes.

Memorials may be directed to the American Legion Iowa Falls, the Bliss Cancer Center in Ames, Iowa or Hospice of North Iowa.

The family would like to extend their sincere thanks to all her friends and family who were so very instrumental in helping her through this difficult journey of battling cancer. Special thanks to Dr. Bahamadi and Dr. Hopkins and their staff at the Bliss Cancer Center in Ames, Dr. Brunkhorst and staff at Hansen Family Hospital, staff at Grand JiVante in Ackley, and Hospice of North Iowa.