

Helen Baird Branyan, age 92, of Columbia, MO, died on January 15 in Columbia, MO.

A funeral service will be held on January 22 at St. George Episcopal Church in Camdenton, MO. A memorial celebration of Helen's life will take place at the Lake of the Ozarks in late June 2020. For more information, contact George Branyan at

Helen was born on August 26, 1927 in Des Moines, Iowa to Clarice Ruby Bloomfield and John Milford Baird, a Presbyterian Minister, while the family was on furlough from missionary work in Egypt. Helen was the inquisitive middle daughter of three girls and earned the nickname "little Bolshevik" for her challenging questions and feisty independence. Helen had a flair for the dramatic and pursued the theater arts at Muskingum University in New Concord, OH, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1949 and went on to earn a Masters in Theater and Speech from the University of Iowa in 1951.

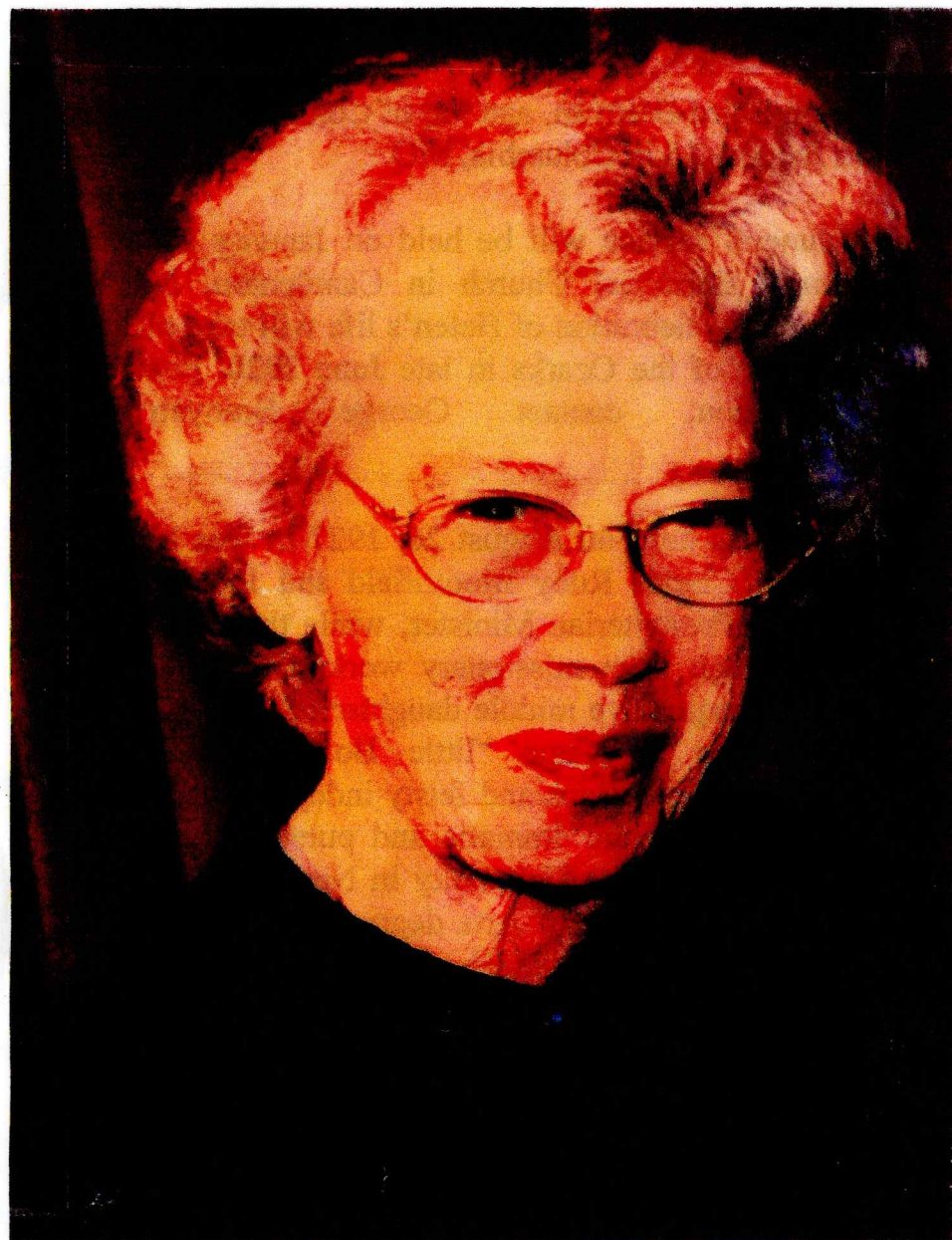
After completing her Masters, Helen started her long and varied teaching career at Iowa City High School. While there, she met a charming and confident new instructor in the history department, Robert L. Branyan, and the two were married on June 9, 1956 in

Washington, IA. Soon they welcomed into the family a daughter, Jane, in 1958, and a son, George, in 1962. Helen devoted herself to raising children but often earned extra funds for the household by typing manuscripts for graduate students, leveraging her prodigious typing skills. After the kids were old enough to fend for themselves, Helen picked up her career again, earning a second Masters degree in 1978 in Broadcast Management from Central Michigan University. Later, she worked for Central Michigan University in the Continuing Education Department and in 1980 served a temporary one year appointment as a professor of English at Albion College, Albion, MI. But theater always remained Helen's special calling, and she directed and acted often in service of several community theater groups. She also conducted research on theatrical history and published an article in the Journal of Popular Culture in 1991.

Helen and Robert retired to the Lake of the Ozarks in 1991 where Helen directed and acted in dozens of productions with the Sunrise Beach Little Theater. Her last dramatic work, co-written with Robert, was a tribute to the lake area they loved so much: the play "Camden County: Our Heritage, Our Hope." It was a perfect blend of their complementary talents, written for and performed at the annual Camdenton, MO Dogwood Festival.

Helen and Robert were long-time members of St. George Episcopal Church in Camdenton, MO, where Helen served as a Daughter of the King and sang in the choir. They were active in numerous community organizations and causes at the Lake of the Ozarks area for 25 years, including Citizens Against Domestic Violence and the Camden County Museum.

Helen was preceded in death by her daughter, Jane Branyan Danner, and sister Mary Jean Baird. Helen is survived by her sister Charlotte, son George, grandson Marshall Danner, granddaughters Marzieh and Ruby Branyan, great-grandson Ellis Robert Danner, and another great-grandson due in February.



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