



Rose Christine Graves Heiberg

April 17, 1914 - June 23, 2010

Rose Christine “Christie” Graves Heiberg, a longtime Rockville Centre resident and community activist who served on the village school board, died of natural causes on June 23.

Born April 17, 1914 in Cambridge, MA, Christie grew up in Wellesley Hills, MA. Her father, Samuel Graves, was Superintendent of Schools in Wellesley and her mother, Wilhelmina Graves, was a gifted pianist who studied with Edward McDowell.

Christie graduated from Simmons College in Boston with a BA in Nursing in 1934. She was ahead of her time in her efforts to promote scrupulous cleanliness in hospitals. In her early twenties, she worked as charge nurse and teacher at Brooklyn Hospital School of Nursing. She volunteered at many public health clinics, including the Polio Pioneers program in the 1950s. She was also a proud Red Cross volunteer and a longtime blood donor.

Christie was married for over 40 years to Robert Miller Heiberg, who died in 1981. In 1949, they moved to Rockville Centre to raise their budding family. It was in Rockville Centre that Christie honed her deep commitment to community activism. One day in the 1950s she put her baby daughter for a nap outside and found her backyard filled with smoke. This led her to campaign for an ordinance banning outdoor leaf burning, which resulted in one of the first pieces of clean air environmental legislation in New York State. Christie cared strongly about improving education and literacy. From 1972-1977, she served as a trustee on the RVC school board. She was also an

active member of the PTA and a founding member of the Committee for Better Education. Christie was a longtime volunteer and tutor for Literacy Volunteers of America. She was a dedicated supporter of the RVC Public Library. Her children remember her borrowing and devouring stacks of mystery novels, biographies, and poetry books.

Christie loved kids. In addition to raising her five children, she was a den mother for the Cub Scouts in the 1950s and was a founder and club leader of 4-H clubs in RVC. Christie was also a parishioner of St. Mark's Church, where she served as a Sunday school teacher.

Passionate about family history, Christie worked on genealogy for many years, discovering and contacting relatives near and far. She was happy to extend the definition of family in many directions, welcoming everyone to her home. Christie loved traveling, hiking, canoeing, nature, museums, theater, the New York Times, and crossword puzzles and word games. She was a woman full of curiosity. With wonder and delight, she explored everything from a small praying mantis egg in her Rockville Centre backyard to the Great Pyramids of Egypt. She was known for her quirky resourcefulness as well as her delicious cookies and chocolate cake. Her compassion, energy, enthusiasm, intelligence, and generosity are a wonderful legacy.

Christie is survived by her children, Robert Heiberg of Lake Ronkonkoma, Karen Chrisman of Belchertown, MA, Margaret Kollitides of Rockville Centre, and Nancy Heiberg Houser of Baldwin; her grandchildren, Siena Chrisman, Robert, Erik, and Rebecca Heiberg, Katherine Kollitides, Gabriel and Grace Houser; her sister, Margaret Black Mitchell, of Houston, TX; and many nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her son, Donald Heiberg of Denver, CO, and her brothers Samuel, William, Freeman, and Frank Graves.

Christie's family will receive friends on July 6, from 2- 3 pm with a memorial at 3 pm at Tower's Funeral Home, 2681 Long Beach Rd, Oceanside NY. In lieu of flowers, donations in Christie's name can be made to ProLiteracy

(proliteracy.org) or Children's Hospital Boston (childrenshospital.org).

New England Funeral & Cremation Center, LLC, 25 Mill Street, Springfield, Massachusetts is assisting the family locally. To send expressions of sympathy please visit www.nefcc.net.