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Helen S. D'Amore(1916 - 2010)

Helen S. D'Amore passed away June 6, 2010.

Known as Helen or "Mrs. D" to her many friends and acquaintances, Helen was born in Pardee, Va., on Dec. 19, 1916, the second eldest of 11 children born to John and Annie Sech. Following high school graduation in War, W.Va., Helen attended the Capital City School of Nursing in Washington, D.C., graduating in 1939.

After graduating from nursing school, Helen served as a nurse in Washington, D.C., at Gallinger Memorial Hospital and Providence Hospital. Seeking adventure, she joined civil service and served as chief nurse in a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hospital in Trinidad. Given the choice of remaining with the Corps and going to the Alaskan-Canadian (AlCan) Highway or joining the Army, in 1943 Helen joined the Army Nurse Corps and served as a nurse at Army Station hospitals in south Florida. After the war, Captain Sech volunteered for training as a flight nurse and remained on at the School of Aviation Medicine at Randolph Air Base, Texas, as an

instructor of flight nurses. It was there that she met Lt. Col. Adanto A.S. D'Amore ("Dr. D"), who was stationed at Brooke Army General Hospital for refresher training in surgery after returning from nearly 39 months in a Japanese Prison Camp. A romance bloomed, Helen left the Army, and they were married in 1947 in the Eisenhower Chapel on Lowry Air Force Base, Denver.

Helen "followed the flag" with Dr. D around the globe for the next 21 years, with their children, Bob, John and Helen, joining along the way. She actively encouraged and supported her family, the U.S. Air Force and local communities everywhere the family was stationed. The family arrived at Eglin AFB in 1964, where Col. D'Amore was the hospital commander. Dr. D retired from Eglin AFB Hospital in 1968 and they decided to stay in Fort Walton Beach, Fla., where Helen added yet another accomplishment to the many already acquired. Helen became a local businesswoman, owning and operating Swiss Colony Cheese stores in University Mall, Pensacola, and Santa Rosa Mall in Mary Esther. Later, Helen opened yet another cheese, wine and sandwich shop in the Shore Shopping Center in Destin. Her justly famed Bourbon Cake was a state fair baked goods winner and a highly-sought prize at local fund raisers.

During these many years in Fort Walton Beach, Helen was actively involved in the local Chamber of Commerce and Fort Walton Beach Women's Club, in which she held local and state office and chaired many committees. Helen also concentrated her energy on establishing the local chapter of the Doctor's Wives Alliance and received the "Peggy Wilcox Award" for exemplary service to the Florida Medical Wives Alliance. Helen was also active on the Board of Directors of Catholic Social Services and the Heritage Museum Association of Valparaiso. She contributed to our local political scene by being an active campaigner for mayoral candidates and through her attendance at zoning and development hearings with the purpose of protecting our waterfront environment.

Helen left a legacy of personal involvement in our community and especially of encouragement to other women to advance professionally and contribute to society.

Helen is survived by her children, Helen Holt (Hank) of Mary Esther, Bob (Gretchen) of San Antonio, Texas, and John (Kate) of Frederick, M.D.; grandchildren, Melissa Bowell, Heather Powell, Moira D'Amore, Andrew D'Amore, Lara D'Amore and Thomas D'Amore; great-grandchildren, Madeline and Abigail Bowell, Parker and Carter Powell; sister, Nell Hughes; and brothers, Mike, Paul and Andy Sech.

The Legion of Mary will offer a rosary at 4:30 p.m. Thursday, June 10, at Emerald Coast Funeral Home. The family will receive friends following it from 5 to 7 p.m.

The family would like to thank Theresa and Suzanne, the compassionate nurses of Emerald Coast Hospice, for the care and comfort they so readily offered, the wonderful staff of Belvedere Commons that gave mother and our family a year of unconditional love and support, and the ladies who cared for our parents before that.

Funeral arrangements are entrusted to Emerald Coast Funeral Home, 113 Racetrack Road N.E., Fort Walton Beach. Expressions of sympathy may be viewed and submitted online at www.emeraldcoastfuneralhome.com.

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