



Helen Gaskin

May 15, 1920 - July 31, 2013

Helen Gaskin, a longtime organist at two Durant churches, died July 31 after a brief illness. She was 93.

Brown's Funeral Services is handling arrangements. At Helen's request she will be cremated.

A celebration of Helen's life will be held Sunday, August 18 at 1:30 p.m. at the First Christian Church with Pastor James Robinson of the First Baptist Church conducting the ceremony.

Born Helen Isom on May 15, 1920 in McAlester, she was the daughter of Roy and Carrie Isom, who owned a grocery store in nearby Crowder.

Introduced to music by her mother, who was church organist at First Baptist in Crowder, Helen began playing piano at church on Sundays when she was 11 years old.

In 1938, shortly after a fondly remembered senior trip to Tulsa to see Bob Wills perform at the famous Cain's Ballroom, she married her high school sweetheart, J.M. Gaskin.

She attended Oklahoma Baptist University for one year and then went to work full time to help her new husband with expenses as he earned a divinity degree from OBU.

The couple settled in Coalgate during World War II where her husband became pastor of the First Baptist Church and Helen served as church organist. Over the next several decades the couple also served First Baptist Churches as pastor and organist in Tonkawa, Heavener and Durant.

From 1962-1976 Helen was church organist at First Baptist in Durant. When her husband, Dr. J.M. Gaskin, retired, Helen left her position, thinking her future Sunday mornings would be less structured. But that didn't last long. In 1977 she began what she thought would be a brief stint as church organist at First Christian. It turned into a 33 year association, which ended with her retirement in 2011. The First Christian Church held a retirement reception for Helen, and it included a surprise visit by Durant Mayor Jerry Tomlinson, who read a proclamation citing her years of service at First Christian.

In addition to Sunday church services, Helen played at countless weddings, funerals, Durant Chamber of Commerce banquets and other special occasions. For many years she was pianist for the Durant Kiwanis Club, where her considerable keyboard skills led the way for spirited sing-a-longs. The Kiwanis Club honored Helen by welcoming her into the Durant organization as its first ever female member.

Among the many community organizations to which she contributed over the years she especially enjoyed her time with the Durant P.E.O. chapter.

Helen loved a wide variety of music, ranging from traditional church hymns to classical and pop music. She never missed an episode of the Lawrence Welk Show, and as recently as a few days ago, was humming along to one of her favorite tunes on a Lawrence Welk re-run on OETA. In 1992 Helen and Dr. Gaskin endowed a church music scholarship at OBU.

Her varied interests included collecting antiques, trying out new recipes and tending to her flowers. Her latest issue of "Home and Gardening" magazine arrived the day of her passing. Always a night owl, she stayed up late most evenings, working crossword puzzles and watching Johnny Carson and Johnny's successor Jay Leno.

Helen was always punctual, whether it was for Wednesday night choir practice or a club meeting, but her on-time record for weekly hair appointments with Sue Bryant were legendary. Only the most severe ice storm could prevent her from making it to Sue's on schedule. She was especially appreciative of Mary McCalib, who took care of driving and many other responsibilities during the

past year.

When there was a knock at the door, Helen was always generous, whether the visitors were selling Girl Scout cookies, trick-or-treating, or Christmas caroling. No stray cat that ventured by her door ever went hungry.

Helen was loved, admired and appreciated by many, including her church and community friends, neighbors and family. She will be greatly missed.

She is survived by husband J.M. Gaskin of Durant; son Ray Gaskin and his wife Suzanne of Pottsboro, Texas; granddaughter Kelly Salinas, her husband Jesse and great grandson Alex, of McAllen, Texas; grandson Kent and his wife Melissa, of Las Cruces, N.M.; granddaughter Sarah Johnson and her husband Jeremiah, and great granddaughter Lola, of Gunter, Texas; sister Bertha Littrell of Muskogee; nephews Danny Littrell and Jimmy Littrell and their families; nephew Tommy Isom and his family; niece Connie Gibson, and her family.

The family has requested that anyone who wishes to make a memorial gift select from the following: The music program at First Baptist Church Durant, The music program at First Christian Church Durant, or The Helen Gaskin music scholarship fund at OBU.

Tribute Wall



“ *Helen Gaskin*

January 08, 2023 at 11:32 PM



“ *I am saddened at the loss of this beautiful, classy lady BUT happy I had the opportunity to spend time talking with her at several Gaskin family events.*

Les Palmer - August 11, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ *I am so sorry to hear of your loss. I was a teenager the last time I saw her. She was playing the piano. We would tell her any current song on the radio & she would play it, by ear. She was an impressive woman.*

Connie Isom-Gibson - August 08, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ *Brother Gaskin and Family.
We the brothers of Heavener Masonic Lodge express of condolences for your loss. We still remember you and yours as you were our Pastor and will always be.
Heavener Masonic Lodge
Dan Blair Chaplin*

Heavener Masonic Lodge - August 05, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ *Dr. Gaskin and Ray, So sorry for your loss...Your mother was quite a lady...My deepest condolences...Roger Clark*

Roger Clark - August 05, 2013 at 12:00 AM

DB

“ For many many years Bro and Sister Gaskin have been a part of our family, my mother listened to Bro Gaskin on the radio, or at least that's what I was told and many of his books that are still in my library.. I'm sure Mom will be happy to show Sis. Gaskin around heaven. God bless the family in this time of adjustment.

Doug Barkley - August 03, 2013 at 12:00 AM

KE

“ Helen will be greatly missed by many, especially her P.E.O.sisters in Chapter DJ. Such a talented, generous and sweet lady, I count it a privilege to have known her.

Kay Eggleton - August 03, 2013 at 12:00 AM