

Obituary of Helen (Feist) Krumm

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Helen Krumm, 89, Hague, passed away peacefully at the Linton Hospital on Wednesday, Nov. 18, 2009, surrounded by her children. Helen (Feist) Krumm was born in Strassburg, South Russia (Kutschurgan District, today near Odessa, Ukraine), on Oct. 3, 1920, to Stephen and Mariann (Rothiger) Feist. The oldest of four children, Helen had many friends and loved to attend school, sing, dance and get into trouble with her sisters and beloved brother, Joseph. Helen's life was turned upside down in 1941 with the beginning of World War II in Russia. The German language was forbidden, churches were destroyed, and friends and relatives disappeared in the night. Despite the unrest and hardship, Helen fell in love with and married Eugene Feist, a young soldier. In 1944, Helen and her family were displaced from Russia. Left with only the possessions they could carry, the women walked across Romania and Hungary into Poland where they worked in a factory making clothes for the German Army. After several months they were displaced again, this time to Germany. Throughout everything, Helen's mother, Mariann, remained strong and never lost faith that they would persevere. "My ma was such a feisty lady. She always said, 'We're going to make it over. We're going to make it.'" Tragically, that year Helen's husband was killed shortly before the birth of their daughter, Marie. For the next six years, Helen worked on a small orchard in Germany and raised her daughter with the help of her mother. After Germany fell to the Americans, Helen began receiving care packages from Joseph and Katherine Krumm of Hague via the Catholic Charities Program. Following the exchange of a series of letters, Joseph and Katherine offered a fresh start by paying for the passage of Helen and her daughter to the U.S. Helen faced an agonizing decision about whether to stay in war-torn Europe with her family or venture to America alone. She decided to go. When asked why, Helen said, "Columbus took a chance, too. Why shouldn't I?" Helen and her daughter set sail from Bremerhaven on Oct. 10, 1951, and caught their first glimpse of the Statue of Liberty on Nov. 1. From there they traveled across the country, finally arriving in Hague on Nov. 5 in cold and snowy weather. For the next three years, Helen enjoyed a peaceful existence working on the farm. She learned English by listening to the radio and reading as many books as she could get her hands on. Unfortunately, Joseph's wife, Katherine, passed away in 1954. Helen helped him through this difficult time and slowly love blossomed. The following year, Joe and Helen were married at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Hague. They had seven beautiful children, David, Paul, Cathy, Ann, Mona, Lisa and Francis. According to Helen, Joe loved the children greatly. "The more the merrier," he would say. "If I get a thousand, I'll put a fence up and put them all in." After Joe passed away in 1969, Helen continued to farm.

She was a proud member of St. Mary's Altar Society and enjoyed working on the annual church supper and decorating the altar with flowers from her garden. Among her greatest pleasures were cooking and telling stories about her early years in Russia and Germany which are documented in the Germans from Russia Heritage Collection. She also loved gardening and cultivated an array of vegetables and marigolds which greeted passersby as they entered town. Helen was most happy when surrounded by her family and was heartbroken by the death of her daughter, Cathy, in 2000.

She is survived by her sisters, Lydia and Bertha of Germany; sons, David (Barb) Krumm of Eureka, S.D., Paul (Donna) Krumm of Sandy, Utah, and Francis (Kelly) Krumm of Hague; daughters, Ann (Dave) Hageman of Hoven, S.D., Mona (Bill) Franck of Casselton, Lisa (Andy) Hulm of Hague and Marie (Jim) Feist of Zeeland, and one son-in-law, Gerald Hulm of Strasburg. Grandma Krumm is also survived by many dear friends and 35 adoring grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren who will greatly miss her loving hands and delicious caramel rolls. Helen is preceded in death by her parents, brother, husbands and beloved daughter Cathy. "There's not a thing I would change in my life. I just accept what I cannot change and go on, because that's the only way you can make it. Maybe we weren't high-fashion people, but we got along and we loved you—all you children," Helen said.

Funeral Mass was held at 10:30 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 21, 2009, at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Hague, with concelebrants Rev. Paul Eberle and Rev. Albert Leary. Organist was Jennifer Krumm. Scripture readers were Rebecca Sprynczynatyk and Lisa Hulm. Gift bearers were the grandchildren. Mass servers were Hope and Taylor Krumm. Music was "How Great Thou Art," "Amazing Grace," "Be Not Afraid," "On This Day, O Beautiful Mother" and "Hail Mary, Gentle Woman."

Casket bearers were grandchildren, Eric Hulm, Sarah Krumm, Robert Krumm, Darren Krumm, Zachary Krumm, Brian Hageman, Nicholas Franck and Colton Hageman.

Interment was in St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery, Hague, under the direction of Myers Funeral Home of Linton.