



Helen J Ragsdale

August 29, 1931 - March 10, 2020

Obituary

Helen J. Ragsdale was born in Oakwood, Texas on August 29, 1931, to the union of Alice Dancey- Burnett and Barney Burnett. Her mother, father, four sisters; Mildred, Bonnie, Doris, Clara, three brothers; Herman, Lloyd and Frank, son, Ronald Ragsdale, grandson, James Ragsdale and husband, James Ragsdale preceded her in death.

Helen grew up in Corsicana, Texas and relocated to Kansas City, Missouri at the age of sixteen to live with her sister and brother- in- law, Bonnie and Maurice Carroll. She graduated from Lincoln High School in 1949. Helen enjoyed working at Chasnoff's and enjoyed her gift of fashion design. She met and married her devoted husband, James and married him in 1949 and to this union five children were born; Ronald, Deborah, Denise, Wanda and Beverly. The Ragsdale Family joined the Paseo Baptist Church where Helen served as Sunday School Secretary, Bostic Circle President and as a faithful member of the church family.

As a community advocate, our mother served as P.T.A. President at Central Junior High School and volunteered as a tutor in many reading labs throughout the Kansas City Missouri School District. Her love for teaching led

her to enroll in Park University where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in History and a Master of Arts in History and Theory. In 1968, with the reorganization of Lincoln College Preparatory Academy, Helen Ragsdale was recruited to teach college preparatory courses at the school. As a faculty member at Lincoln College Preparatory, she taught International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) History and Theory. Her students respected her and excelled academically in the classes she taught. She was voted Lincoln's Teacher of the Year in 1986. She retired from Lincoln College Preparatory Academy in 1996.

Following her retirement as an educator in 1996, our mother continued to address the educational and social needs of students by running for the Kansas City (Missouri) Public Schools (KCPS) Board of Directors. Helen Ragsdale was elected to the first of three terms in 1998. She served as Board President, Treasurer, Education Committee Chair, and Board Liaison to the federal court appointed Desegregation Monitoring Committee.

Helen Ragsdale served on and led the board during a time of great turmoil. During the 1999-2000 school year, the district lost its accreditation and was threatened with state takeover. Mrs. Ragsdale, her colleagues, and district leadership headed by the district's new superintendent, Dr. Bernard Taylor, Jr. were given eighteen months to regain some level of accreditation. In June 2002, the state Board of Education voted to grant the school district provisional accreditation averting state takeover of the school district.

Helen Ragsdale's leadership and collaborative work style allowed the district to forge relationships with community and business leaders. This was most

evident with the implementation of reform efforts such as work with the Institute for Learning's Comprehensive Balanced Literacy Achievement Model for elementary grades and Achievement First! Achievement First! was a partnership with the Kaufmann Foundation focused on promoting increased college and career readiness by increasing student proficiency in math and English.

Helen Ragsdale spearheaded efforts to make the study of African American History a graduation requirement for students in the Kansas City Missouri School District. She was instrumental in the work to secure Historic Landmark Status for her alma mater, "Lincoln College Prep". She was a proud alumna of the class of 1949.

In 2000, Helen Ragsdale was recognized by Ingram's Magazine in an article, "Sixteen Women in Education": Opportunities and Issues. The article focused on the role of women in the changing political and cultural context of public education. Mrs. Ragsdale represented the district in the Labor-Management Council of Public Officials, the Lincoln High School Alumnae Association, Freedom, Inc., and Association of Black Elected Officials.

Helen Ragsdale worked diligently with the N.A.A.C.P's ACT-SO program entering students into competitions throughout the nation. In 1988, Helen was voted National Director of Education with the Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs, Incorporated (NBPW). In the capacity of

Director, she traveled to cities promoting persuasive and descriptive writing designed to elevate the writing process for urban youth. Helen was dedicated to the community of South Round Top. As the Chairman of the South Round Top Neighborhood Association, she focused on development, beautification and safety of the local community. Helen Ragsdale served on many local based boards and was committed to creating a culture of enriching the greater good. She enjoyed serving on the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Board, a board dedicated to presenting cultural awareness and events. Helen was a dedicated member of Delta Sigma Theta, Incorporated, and Jackson County Links, Incorporated and served her beloved Kansas City community with dignity, grace and compassion.

In 2018, Helen Ragsdale was named one of the Monument to Freedom, Justice & Courage 2018 Honorees in Kansas City, Missouri and in 2015, she was nominated and named Lincoln High Alumnae Sesquicentennial Honorees.

Our mother, Helen Jean Ragsdale, loved God, her husband James, all of her family, and her church. She leaves to cherish her legacy and memory, four daughters; Deborah Ragsdale-McGill, Denise Ragsdale, Wanda Ragsdale-Bland and Beverly Ragsdale-Swinney, one daughter- in- law, Phyllis Ragsdale, seven grandchildren; Stacey Ragsdale-Moore, Elteainte Ragsdale, Rahman McGill, Arien Ragsdale, Armand Bland, Mariah Bland, and Luqman Swinney, one grandson- in- law, Michael Moore, eight great grandchildren; Justin and Jordan Moore, Elteainte, Jr., Kimani, Zahir, Zoey, Kwalee Ragsdale, Ronald Ragsdale, II, nieces, nephews and relatives.

Funeral Services will be held at 11:00 A.M. on Saturday, March 21, 2020 at Paseo Baptist Church. Delta Service 10:00 A.M. Interment Leavenworth National Cemetery Monday, March 23, 2020 at 12:30 P.M.

To send flowers
to the family or plant a tree
in memory of Helen J Ragsdale, please visit our floral store.

[Read More](#)

Tribute Wall

LS

“ *Structured design in red and white was purchased for the family of Helen J Ragsdale by LCPA SAC. Send Flowers Hope you can smile, even through your tears, when you think about how lucky you were to have her for a mother. May God's peace comfort you now and always LCPA SAC*

LCPA SAC - May 25, 2023 at 02:59 PM

AJ

“ *To the Ragsdale Family We take this time to express our personal condolences to the family of Helen Ragsdale. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the family and friends during this time of great sadness. To the family and friends we encourage all to please keep this promise near your hearts at all times. God is the source of this promise, so we can have great faith that what he says will surely become reality. He tells us that soon He would use His great powers to restore life back to many who have died. (John 5:28-29) Yes this promise serves as a personal guarantee from God that Helen, and billions of others will stand up in life again, and be reunited back with their many family members and friends. Until then, we use this time to learn all we can about the resurrection hope that will take place earth wide. There are nine accounts in the Bible that speaks about this wonderful provision from God. Here is just one such example that is recorded at Acts 9:36-42. So in closing we say please keep this promise of God near your hearts at all times. Remember that when God makes a promise, it becomes reality. For God does not lie. (Titus 1:2)*

Albert Caldwell Jr - March 21, 2020 at 03:45 PM

L4

“ To the family of Helen J Burnett-Ragsdale, We are deeply saddened in the loss of Helen J Burnett-Ragsdale. Lincoln High Class of “49” express our heartfelt sympathy for your family. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. John 14: 1-3 Our love and sympathy, Lincoln High Class of “49”

Lincoln Class of 49 - March 20, 2020 at 06:00 PM

L4

“ To the family of Helen J Burnett-Ragsdale, We are deeply saddened in the loss of Helen J Burnett-Ragsdale. Lincoln High Class of “49” express our heartfelt sympathy for your family. Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. John 14: 1-3 “May your memories of Helen bring you comfort in knowing that your love one is now safe in the hands of the Lord.” Our love and support will always be here for you in your time of need. Once again, we are so sorry for your loss. Our love and sympathy, Lincoln High Class of “49” Vivienne Starks-Smith – Pres. Frenchye Taylor – Secretary

Lincoln Class of 49 - March 20, 2020 at 05:56 PM

JC

“ To the entire Helen Ragsdale family, You are each in my daily prayers. Remember, Jesus loves you and so do I. Helen and I have the same birthdates, same sorority membership and shared leadership volunteer roles with the Kansas City Missouri Public School System. Thanks for sharing her with the community-at-large. Lovingly, Joanne M. Collins

Jjoanne M. Collins - March 19, 2020 at 08:32 PM

VM

“ To the family of Helen Ragsdale, Please know to unite your hearts of thy servants, and reveal to you thy great purpose. May you follow thy commandments and abide in thy law. These are attributes I learn from your mom thru NANBPWS Inc. to use in my life. Your mother will be missed. I will keep you in prayer. Vera Landry Moore from Dallas, Tx. By way of Wichita, Kansas Wichita, Kansas

Vera Landry Moore - March 18, 2020 at 10:50 PM