



## Helen Lucille Hammer Kern

October 6, 1924 - March 24, 2022

Helen Lucille Kern, née Hammer, 97, passed from life on March 24, 2022. Helen was born October 6, 1924 in Knoxville, Tennessee to parents Helen Ruth and A.B. Hammer, Sr. She lived on the outskirts of Knoxville and attended Farragut High School until her family moved to Anniston, Alabama. As a popular senior in class of '43 she was voted "Queen" of Anniston High School. During her senior year she met and dated transfer student, Herbert V. Kern. Since Helen's mother did not drive, her dad got a second car for Helen to drive her younger brothers to school. (Sister Emily was still a baby) The brothers did complain that she often picked them up late because she was visiting with Herb. After high school, Helen attended the University of Alabama while Herb went to Presbyterian College and trained to fly (awaiting deployment to the Pacific during WWII). That year Helen's father bought a salvage stock, rented an empty building in Guntersville and moved the family there to start "Hammer's."

At University of Alabama, Helen joined the Alpha Chi Omega sorority. She was quite pretty and during lunch with a college friend, she caught the attention of actor, Mickey Rooney. Rooney invited Helen and her girlfriend to go flying the next day. Herb always teased that she could have been number #2. She was very embarrassed by this, since she did not have much respect for the actor in later years. However, her heart was always Herb's. In July, just before he shipped out, Helen's Dad gave her \$100 and a train ticket to

Salinas, Kansas where Herb was stationed. They married there. After the war, Herb returned to Guntersville and worked at the store until they opened Haleyville. On March 13, 1948, he and Helen moved again to open Hammer's Scottsboro. The sweethearts worked side by side. Salesmen thought Helen and Herb favored and often asked Herb, if his "sister" was dating anyone. He clarified that quickly. For over 74 years, they had the support of faithful employees she felt were like family.

Both Helen & Herb were committed to their community. They supported numerous local charities and individuals going to college or seminary. Many never knew who their benefactors were. Helen was especially committed to her church. They thought it important to attend together, so initially Helen went with Herb to the Catholic church in Guntersville but later he attended First Baptist Scottsboro with her, where they remained members. Helen was a dedicated Sunday School teacher and spent many hours on her lessons. She had Biblical reference encyclopedias that would rival many church libraries. She started teaching Sunday School as a young girl and continued for over 70 years. Additionally, she taught GA's and served on pulpit search committees. Although financially conservative, she was more socially liberal than most thought, having supported women in church leadership and other social issues. She was civic minded as well and in the late 1950s was a Girl Scout leader in addition to working at Hammer's. Also, Helen loved to sing, play the piano and was an early member of the Scottsboro Music Study Club. Young people often gathered at her home for "sign-a-longs" while she fixed refreshments.

Helen's other passions were family, historic preservation, bridge games, the Three Arts Club (where she was an original members), the Scottsboro-Jackson Heritage Center (where she was on the board) and rescuing stray animals. While she was not fond of flying, she did travel to Rome, Italy and later went snow skiing in Colorado with Vesta Lou Skelton and friends. Helen's

interests led her and friend, Stina Bankston to travel to Atlanta to take weekend courses in museum development at The High Museum of Art. They used the information to start the Three Arts' "Rent a Painting" program in an upstairs location on the square. Local artists would showcase their work and people interested in purchasing could "rent to buy." This program later morphed into the "Art in the Park" at Caldwell Park. Dear friend, Joy Airheart and Helen enjoyed many trips to Atlanta to visit their daughters and talk about Alabama football. (Helen cheered for Auburn when they were not playing Alabama.) Even in her 90s she would wake up singing "Yea, Alabama" on every Fall football Saturday.

Family was her most beloved passion. She looked forward to hosting 20 to 30 of her siblings, nieces and nephews at Thanksgiving. When she was no longer able to prepare the tables and make everything attractive, she still directed it. Although she did not enjoy cooking too much, her fruit salad was famous at Thanksgiving. After the big meal most would retire to the living room where her sister, Emily Hall would play Christmas carols on the piano, and everyone sang. The best entertainment was when Emily played the "Nutcracker Suite" while Helen and sisters-in-law Wanda and Vera danced a mock ballet. She kept everyone laughing until evening.

Helen's kindhearted and loving spirit was central to who she was. She liked to be generous. She cared about people and animals. She helped other people be successful. She was kind, gracious, modest and loving. She was committed to the things that last. Now she will enjoy heaven as she enjoyed life. She found salvation as a gift from God, not of works. Helen and Herb belonged to that group dubbed "the greatest generation." We must now carry their legacy forward. By this, Helen will live on in this world and the next.

Helen was predeceased by her husband, Herbert V Kern, her parents, Ruth

Hammer and AB Hammer, Sr., her son, Herbert V Kern, Jr, her brothers, AB Hammer, Jr of Clinton, TN and Earl Hammer of Winchester, TN. She is survived by her daughter, Anita Kern and her husband, Carl Fowler of Atlanta, many nieces and nephews on both the Kern and Hammer sides as well as siblings from her father's second family. She leaves behind many close friends in Scottsboro and Atlanta.

A Celebration of Life service will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 14 at the First Baptist Church, Scottsboro. Because of her love of animals, her church and the Scottsboro-Jackson Heritage Center, memorial donations may be made to the First Baptist Church Scottsboro (256-574-3308 or [www.fbcscottsboro.org](http://www.fbcscottsboro.org)), Spay & Neuter of Jackson County (256-299-9726), or Scottsboro-Jackson Heritage Center (256-259-2122 or [www.heritage@scottsboro.org](mailto:www.heritage@scottsboro.org)).

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

MAY 14. 3:00 PM (cst)

First Baptist Church of Scottsboro  
215 S. Andrews St.  
Scottsboro, AL 35768

# Tribute Wall



“ *Helen Lucille Hammer Kern*

October 05, 2023 at 01:26 AM



“ *Anita,  
Your mom was special. She organized and was the energy behind a foursome of bridge for several ladies whose health problems made them poor candidates for the game, but who still enjoyed playing, socializing, etc. Her efforts meant much to my mother. My mother, my dad, my siblings, and I appreciated and admired your mom for her determination and the gift of her time. Judy Dawson*

**Judy Dawson** - March 30, 2022 at 10:20 AM



“ *Mary Horton lit a candle in memory of Helen Lucille Hammer Kern*



**Mary Horton** - March 27, 2022 at 09:25 PM



“ *My condolences to Anita in the loss of your mom Helen. She and your dad Herb were good friends to my mom and dad through the years. She will be missed...sending prayers of comfort to you...  
Caroline Weavil King*

**Caroline Weavil King** - March 25, 2022 at 07:59 PM