



Helga Maria (Roeder) Camp

July 20, 2025

The Life of Helga Maria Roeder/Camp

By Carl Camp

She was born in Merkendorf, Germany in 1939 to Karl and Babette Roeder.

In the family she was born in, the oldest sister was Maria Roeder. Maria died sometime during World War II due to an infection and the family could not get the medicine to save her. The only brother was Carl Heinz Roeder that was born next, who currently lives in Colorado. Then there was Irma Roeder who passed away just a week after Helga in 2025. Then there was Erica Roeder that lived near the Great Lakes in the US with her son Uwe until her death several years ago. Then came Helga Roeder who married and became Helga Camp. And the sweet baby of the Family is Margit Roeder that married and became Margit May living in Sacramento California.

Between the ages to 10 to 12 Helga developed Epilepsy. This condition would plague her for the rest of her life. The doctors warned that the drugs they had at that time would cause her to become paranoid and would have other mental issues. Even after decades of better medicine in the U.S., the doctor was right and it became a permeant part of her personality.

Helga grew up in the middle and aftermath of World War II Germany. She met

her future husband William Camp, an American GI, at the train station. He fell in love with a lovely young 18 year old German girl with an unbelievable passion for the Roman Catholic Faith. After dating her, he asked her to marry him. She refused unless he became a Roman Catholic. Well, he convinced her to marry him if he would be baptized as a Baptist and would allow the children to be raised Roman Catholic instead. Then she agreed to marry him.

The first place they lived was a small apartment in Germany and all they had for transportation was his motorcycle. When they moved he managed to move everything with just the motorcycle and raw grit driving through the small German roads. I don't know if the second place was in Germany or in the United States, but at some point they began living in the US. When they moved again they had a car and it made moving much easier, but the amount of belonging grew exponentially. And when they moved again, they had to get friends to help and get a bigger vehicle to hold everything. This became quite the common scenario, every move required a larger and larger vehicle to move.

Her husband Bill realized that being in the Army, assigned to Motor pool was not the easiest for a married man so he transferred to become an Army Recruiter. The first assignment after training was in Baltimore, Maryland and he excelled at recruiting just in time, because that brought a pay increase and a newborn son in the family. Helga was overjoyed to become a mother in her new country and took to heart being a full-time mother. Just a few years later a second son was born while they were still living in Maryland. Then they moved from a mobile home in a trailer park that the military provided, to a home just outside of Washington DC when she conceived a third child. However, in the evening of a spring day of 1967 she stepped out of the house to get some groceries for dinner when a drunk driver hit her while walking on the side of the road. The accident ended up killing the baby and nearly killing her causing more damage that would be realized for the rest of her life. She

recovered from the accident and the baby was buried at Arlington National Cemetery under the requirement that to keep her there the father must also be buried there or the family would have to pay for the removal and transport of the baby to a civilian cemetery. Bill was laid to rest next to his daughter in 2024.

One thing of interest is that Helga took to gardening. This was evident while living at Fort Totten, New York. The base commander would tour the base during the spring, summer and fall and award the house with the "Best Yard Award" once a month. She won the award several times.

The Family moved every few years as required by the Army and finally in 1975 Bill retired from the Army and they move permanently to Fresno, California. But the mental issues festered and finally in the late 70's they began divorce proceedings. The actual divorce took many years with constant back and forth legal battles even though there was very little of value except for the house which she was awarded very early in the divorce proceedings. But by the time the divorce was finally finished both boys had moved in with their father and she was left alone in that house completely by herself. She stayed there alone from the late 70's until 1997.

In 2002 after spending her entire life being a very devout Roman Catholic, she made the decision to join me at my Protestant Church in Fresno. She was then Baptized and remained a Protestant the rest of her life.

She was admitted to a nursing home in 1997 and got better medical care to treat her many medical, and physical conditions. Her first and longest roommate was a woman named Helen. She was in the nursing home due to a bad stroke. Helen was sharp witted and funny. She was quite different from Helga from having been a cocktail waitress for years. Both women sat in

wheel chairs, and the nursing staff has a funny name for them: "Hel on wheels." A bit of a pun, since both had their names start with "H-E-L". After many years together, and after another stroke Helen passed away. After that Helga's roommates were much older patients who were bed ridden and not communicative. Over the years she was in and out of the hospital, and even overcame COVID 19. However, she lived increasingly in isolation. This situation in combination with her paranoia played a heavy toll on her emotional well-being. Even though she now had many people she could talk to and be with, she withdrew and became more and more isolated staying in her room and especially after losing Helen, she always ate by herself. She remained in that nursing home for 28 years finally passing away in 2025. She is survived by her two sons, 4 grandchildren and one great-grand child.

Cemetery Details

Turlock Memorial Park

575 N. Soderquist Rd.
Turlock, CA 95380
(209) 632-9111
<http://turlockmemorialpark.com>

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG 5. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (PT)

Turlock Funeral Home
425 North Soderquist Road
Turlock, CA 95381
(209) 632-9111
<https://turlockfuneralhome.com>

Interment following Funeral Service

AUG 5. 12:00 PM (PT)

Turlock Memorial Park
575 N Soderquist Rd
Turlock, CA 95380-3749
(209) 632-9111

Funeral Service

AUG 6. 11:00 AM (PT)

Turlock Funeral Home
425 North Soderquist Road
Turlock, CA 95381
(209) 632-9111
<https://turlockfuneralhome.com>