



Helen Boyce Soderlind

December 3, 1930 - June 20, 2025

Helen Boyce Soderlind of Minocqua, Wisc.; Short Hills, N.J., and most recently Manchester, Vt., passed away at her beloved home on Minocqua's Lake Kawaguesaga Friday, June 20. She was 94 years old.

Born on Dec. 3, 1930, in the Milwaukee suburb of Wauwatosa, Helen joined a clan that had moved to Wisconsin specifically to work in the Northwoods. On her father's side, the Boyce family left the paper mills of Corinth, in Saratoga County, New York, around 1900 for the booming Wisconsin paper mills, eventually starting the Wisconsin Paper Products Co., based in Milwaukee. On her mother's side, Helen's grandfather Warren Brooks was an engineer who helped build dams in the Northwoods to facilitate logging and other projects. The Brooks family moved from Massachusetts to Northern Wisconsin, living first in the small town of Tomahawk and later in Milwaukee and Wausau, where Helen visited often as a girl.

Helen's mother (Helen Brooks) and father (Fred Boyce) married around 1920, joining the two Northwoods clans and beginning what the family feels to be a modest dynasty built on love of place. The land Helen's grandfathers bought together on Lake Kawaguesaga kept the families connected for many generations, and was the great defining love of Helen's life. Though she never owned her own car, she did drive a wooden Thomson rowboat with a deck on the bow and a 9 horsepower engine, given to her for her 16 th birthday. She

spent countless hours exploring the Minocqua chain of lakes in her rowboat as a teenager, her black cocker spaniel Gypsy poised on the deck.

Helen, who as a young woman was known as “Dodo,” was one of the founding members of the Min-aqua Bats Water Ski Club. As she would eagerly explain to anyone who asked, the club began in 1950 as a simple, informal group of summertime lake friends messing around with what was then a new sport. People began gathering on the shoreline to see what the kids were doing out there on the water and before long, the shows became a regular event in Lake Minocqua’s Aquabowl, where the club continues to thrive. Helen successfully navigated the waterski jump as a young woman, and was a regular in the disc, ballet, and pyramid acts.

Helen graduated high school in Wauwatosa and attended Denison University for two years before earning her B.S. degree in 1952 from Northwestern University, from which her mother had also graduated. Helen was proud to be one of the few women of her generation to graduate from what is now Northwestern’s prestigious Kellogg School of Business. She was a sister in the Delta Delta Delta, or Tri-Delt, sorority, as was her Aunt Gertrude.

After college, Helen spent the summer touring Europe with some of her friends; she had such a splendid experience that she decided never to travel overseas again for fear of sullyng the memories. She moved to Minneapolis with two friends and began working at Dayton’s Department Store, where her ambition was to become a buyer. Her roommate Jackie worked at the Minneapolis Tribune and had a reporter friend, Sterling “Jim” Soderlind, who she introduced to Helen. After meeting Helen, the smitten Jim offered to give her a ride up to her family’s lake house in Minocqua; the grateful Helen did not expect that he would then stay with her family for the weekend. But he did, and three years later, in April 1955, they were married.

While her plan had been to live in a city near enough to the lake to visit on weekends, Helen and Jim moved around the country as Jim excelled in his journalism career, relocating first to Chicago, then Florida, and then New York City. They lived in Brooklyn Heights for years, enjoying the Promenade and watching from their apartment building's rooftop as the era's great ocean liners, including the Queen Elizabeth, passed through New York Harbor. Helen was an avid theatergoer, attending many original-cast productions of major Broadway musicals such as *Oliver*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *Mame*. She collected original cast albums and saved every Playbill and program from every theater production she ever attended, including local theaters and the high school plays her daughter was in, adding them to a rubberband-strapped pile on her closet shelf. Helen and Jim's three children, Steven John, Sarah Jean, and Lori Ann, were all born in New York City, but the family moved to New Jersey when Steven reached school age. Their daughter Sarah was diagnosed with disabilities at birth that prevented her from living at home with the family; over the decades, Helen managed this grief by sending gifts and visiting Sarah frequently at her group home in New York.

Helen and Jim lived for 45 years in Short Hills New Jersey, where Helen was a school library aide, was president of the Millburn High School Music Boosters, and taught Sunday school at the Community Congregational Church. The church was especially important to Helen; she attended Bible study and other programming regularly over the years, and composed the monthly "reflections" for the church newsletter. She especially enjoyed the church's live animal Christmas Pageants, as she was an animal lover; in addition to Gypsy, her canine companions included Heather, a Springer Spaniel; and Shasta and Pippa - both English Cocker Spaniels.

In 2007, Helen and Jim relocated to Crane's Mill retirement community in West Caldwell N.J., and after Jim's death in 2022, Helen moved to Equinox

Terrace in Manchester, Vt., to be closer to her daughter Lori.

Throughout her life, Helen returned to Minocqua faithfully each summer. In retirement, Jim purchased Little Ripley Island on Lake Kawaguesaga and for 20 years the couple spent their summer months shuttling between the island and the old cottage. At last they decided the 18- hour drive to the Northwoods from New Jersey was too long to manage, and they passed the care of the cottage to Lori. In 2023, Helen made a grand return visit to the Lake where she enjoyed boat rides and time talking on the screen porch with friends and family, and where the Min-aqua Bats paid tribute to her at one evening's show. Helen's health declined following surgery for a broken hip in May 2025, and daughter Lori brought her back to Minocqua at last on June 19. She passed away in the cottage the next day.

Helen was predeceased by her husband of 67 years, Jim, and her son, Steven; her parents, Helen and Fred, and her brother, W. Brooks Boyce; her step-mother Betty; and her many deeply loved aunts, uncles, and cousins. She is survived by a half-brother, Thomas Boyce; her niece, Carolyn (Boyce) Bierman; her daughter Lori, her much-loved friends Suzanne Parker and Katherine Van Acker, and her Vermont family, Jenna, Lark, and Gryffin. She would also want to note a cherished friend from Short Hills, Kathy Ferris, whose kindness and faithful friendship made a lifelong impression on Helen. She will be remembered by grand-cousins and lake friends, as well as new generations of Brooks and Boyce descendants who now roam the Minocqua woods that Helen loved.

A memorial will be held in July in Minocqua and in September in Short Hills. In Lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Helen's name to the Northwoods Wildlife Center in Minocqua.

Tribute Wall

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Lori - June 28, 2025 at 10:04 AM