



Millie Mrja

MAY 28, 1925 - OCT 24, 2023



Scan to Visit

Table of Contents

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Obituary | Page 3 |
| Events | Page 5 |



Millie Mrja

MAY 28, 1925 - OCT 24, 2023

Sassy, strong, intelligent, independent, loving and loyal, that was Millie Mrja. Her parents immigrated in 1924 to Carson Lake, Minnesota, an iron mining “location” near Hibbing a year before she was born. Her father worked in the mine, as did all the other men in the location. Nearly all came from Yugoslavia. The Depression was very hard on all the families who helped each other survive. Her loving mother made dinners of bean soup, homemade bread and whatever came out of the garden. Millie loved Carson Lake, spending time outdoors with her three siblings. She stayed close to her childhood friends for life. She loved the freedom of riding horses and motorcycles. She was a top student who excelled in math and was always stylish. Upon graduating from high school, she boldly applied to work at the Hill-Annex mine during WWII. She became the first and only woman working at the mine—with 520 men. She and 6 men did the payroll by hand for all the miners. While she did seven pages of giant payroll ledgers every week, her male colleagues did one page each. They got \$400 per month. She got \$90. But she overcame the challenges, took college courses, and expanded her horizons.

Millie moved to Minneapolis in 1949, working as an accountant at many companies such as General Mills, Butler Manufacturing, a diamond importer, a popular dinner theater, and W.W. Clark Corp. whose CFO told her “Millie if you were a man, you’d be president by now”. For a short time, she moved back to Hibbing and worked for Kehne Electric. Her childhood neighbor, Rudy Perpich, a state senator, sought her help to run for Lt. Governor. Along with her dear friend Gabriel Brisbois, they ran an excellent campaign resulting in Rudy’s victory. In those days the Lt. Governor presided over the Senate, so Rudy asked Millie to work for him at the Capitol. Millie handled everything from legislation, constituent services, budgeting, procurement, scheduling and press inquiries. In short, she got stuff done. Millie loved the hubbub of working in the Capitol and made lifelong friends there. Rudy ultimately became



Obituary

Millie Mrja

MAY 28, 1925 - OCT 24, 2023

the longest serving Governor of Minnesota and Millie held several positions in state government, finally retiring as the Assistant Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Economic Security.

Millie was always active in the church. She was the financial secretary of St. Michael's in Hibbing and coordinated the fund-raising for the construction of its beautiful sanctuary. After retirement she served for ten years as the Treasurer of St. George Serbian Orthodox Church in San Diego.

Millie lived a glorious and fulfilling 98 years surrounded by loving friends and family. She had an innate ability to make friends with people of all ages and backgrounds. She kept in touch with hundreds of people by email, cards, and letters right up until her peaceful passing. She never forgot a friend's birthday or telephone number. She was a bookworm who devoured historical biographies, a crossword enthusiast, and read three major newspapers daily. She was incredibly sharp, knowledgeable, and interesting and loved a good political debate. Most of all, she was truly interested in people, asking questions and always helping them when needed. People sought her approval. When she committed to something, she was a formidable force of nature. She pioneered her own path at a time when many women could not.

Millie is survived by her daughter Pamela Naughton of San Diego, CA and her beloved grandchildren Mary Naughton of Santa Monica, CA and Avery Naughton of Arlington, VA, as well as three nieces: Joanne Kampf, Ellen Mrja, and Christine Kopp and ten grandnieces and grandnephews.


Millie would ask that any donations in her name be directed to St. Michael Church at 701 East 40th St in Hibbing, MN 55746.

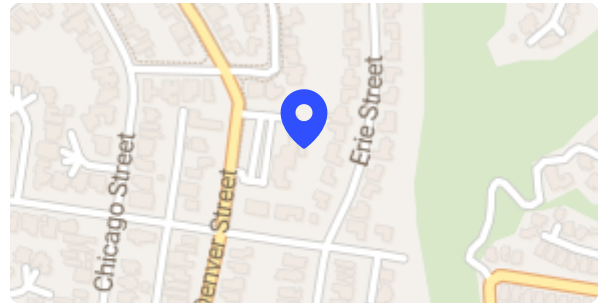


Prayer Service

 **Wednesday**, November 1, 2023

 6:00 PM PT

 **St. George Serbian Orthodox Church**
3025 Denver Street, San Diego CA 92117





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Millie by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



Scan to Visit