



# Mildred Burns

SEP 16, 1927 - JAN 20, 2020



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CHAPEL  
OF THE  
CHIMES  
OAKLAND

Funeral, Cemetery  
& Cremation Services

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## **Mildred Burns**

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**M**ildred Burns, 92 of Manteca passed away on January 20, 2020.

Mildred "Milly" Michelini was born in San Francisco on September 16, 1927. She grew up in Oakland, graduated from University High School, and then went on to complete a secretarial program at Heald Business College. She worked as a secretary for several years at Fuller Glass Company in San Francisco before she met the love of her life John "Jack" Burns in 1950. Milly and Jack were married on November 25, 1951. They settled in Oakland where she embraced her role of wife, mother, and homemaker as they raised their family of four children. Milly was passionate about family, friends, food, and felines. Her door was always open, friends were always welcome and there was always a place at the table for whoever stopped by.

Milly was preceded in death by her husband John "Jack" Edward Burns, son Michael Edward Burns, parents Oreste and Mary Michelini, and brother Roy Michelini.

She is survived by her sister Judith "Judy" Anne Michelini, sisters-in-law Patricia Michelini and Stephanie "Stevie" Burns, daughters Suzanne Gates, Linda Burns, Diana Rabelo (Clement Rabelo), grandchildren Phillip Burns (Rhonda Rodriguez), Michael Gates (Heather Lewis), Mathew Amparano (Amber Price), Brian Gates, Sarah Gates, great granddaughter Mia Nicole Amparano-Price many nieces and nephews and Lucy the cat.

On Monday, January 27th rosary and visitation will be held from 6-9p.m. at Chapel of the Chimes 4499 Piedmont Ave. in Oakland.

On Tuesday, January 28th Funeral mass will be held at St. Leo The Great Catholic Church 176 Ridgeway Ave., Oakland at 10 a.m.



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In lieu of flowers it was Milly's wish that you make a donation to Hannah Boys Center, Saint Jude's Children's Research Hospital, or Guide Dogs for the Blind.

A kind memory shared today\_

By Michael Gates - shared on Facebook:

I want to tell you a story. Today I've heard a lot of, "I'm so sorry," or talk of thoughts and prayers, or of regret. I don't want you to regret, or to be sorry. I want to tell you this story. If you care to know a little about me and my grandmother it'll tell you something about who I am and why I'm that way. So if you have a few minutes to read something that I think would be time well spent, and that I think Nonie would agree would be time better spent than on regret, continue on.

Some of you have had the opportunity to meet my grandma. Her name was Mildred, or Milly but I've always known her as Nonie. As I'm sure is common with grandmas Nonie was my best friend from as early on as I can remember. All through my life, for 39 years, she was someone who was always happy to see me and who supported and loved me unconditionally. When I was very young I can remember her teaching me to play marbles, or spending the night at my grandparent's house as often as possible. Nonie kept Hershey's chocolate milk in the refrigerator because it was one of my favorites and we had spare swim suits that stayed at the house so we could go in the hot tub. Later on she taught me dominos or the card game hearts and I'd go over and mop the kitchen floor or do odd tasks to help out and we'd have tuna sandwiches together at her kitchen table for lunch. Growing older I have fond memories of her being with us on family vacations every summer in the mountains and sometimes even paddling her around in my inflatable raft on one of the little lakes up off Highway 4. Knowing her as an adult I found her to be a living legend. Nonie actually experienced a lot of the history we studied in school and could tell me personal stories from the depression era and war years. She could provide valuable insight through her years of wisdom and linked together the story of who everyone in my family was and where we'd come from.

Years ago I came to realize that it wasn't just me to whom she played this role. She did this for everybody in the family. All her kids, all their kids, at times other people and their kids. She was always there for us all. She and my grandfather raised a family and committed themselves to it, 100%. This was the environment in which I grew up. Until I was an adult, I didn't know any other type of arrangement existed. We were family, we stuck together, we all watched out for one another. That was how it was done. It never even occurred to me as a child or teenager that other



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people don't get the benefit of that experience. I had to learn from my friends that sometimes families don't support each other, and it was a totally foreign idea to me.

In 1992 we lost my grandfather – Jack, or Grampeen as we call him. Nonie took point on the family tree by herself and would hold the position for 28 years. In all that time I don't think there was a single day that went by where she didn't bring him up in conversation. As I grew into an adult I came to appreciate what that steadfast devotion meant. Other relationships around her crumbled but she remained unquestioningly committed to someone who'd been gone for years, but represented what mattered most to her. I'm getting married in less than six months and I don't have the words to explain to you what this particular part of Nonie's life lesson to me means right now; right at this particular moment in my life. Indeed she was a role model for us all.

Nonie lost a son, my uncle Michael from whom I got my name, two years before I was born. She lost her husband of 40 years right as they got to retirement age. Almost all of her friends are gone now. She survived a quintuple bypass surgery, double knee replacements and more miscellaneous medical treatments than I can possibly remember. There are five grandchildren altogether that she always loved and supported, along with her three daughters. So many times along the way she could have cracked and no one would have questioned why, but Nonie wasn't one to give up. Looking back now and having enough perspective to understand how difficult life can be at times, I wonder how she did it. As we inherit the earth from our parents and grandparents sometimes I look at what she had to deal with and wonder if I'm up to the task. Again, that's a lesson that Nonie will leave me with to last the rest of my life.

Several years ago Nonie started developing dementia. This particular challenge weighed heavily on the entire family and as a progressive problem, weighed more over time. We didn't talk everyday but I always knew Nonie and I had a special relationship. As dementia robbed her of more and more of her abilities it made it harder and harder to share that relationship. At times we'd have circular conversations that involved a series of five or six questions that would repeat in an endless loop. Other times she would just stay silent to avoid having to try to remember anything. The downward spiral continued on. Toward the end she became increasingly frustrated with her situation and would often lash out at my mom or my aunts who were trying to help her, not understanding what was going on and not being able to remember anything longer than a few minutes before. It's simultaneously heartbreaking to watch someone you love who has so much strength of character go through that, and infuriating to watch anyone treat other people you love who are doing everything they can to help with what seems at the time like utter disdain. Then try



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to weigh a balanced response. This balancing act of good days and bad days and trying to make things work for everyone went on for at least two years, mostly shouldered by my aunts and my mom.

Yesterday morning at 92 years old, Nonie was finally freed of the struggle that had taken so much from her. Early in the morning after all the grandkids had left her hospital room, she went peacefully in her sleep with just her three daughters around her and that seems to be quite a fitting end. She'd been waiting for years to see my uncle and grandfather again and telling us that it was her time. While I don't know if I actually believe that's what happens to us at the end, over the years I've found that the idea brings me some peace. I've also come to realize that if it's not what happens, we can believe it right up to the end and when the end comes it will cease to make any difference. So I hope that's how it goes and consciously push my skepticism to the side. I picture her reunited with all those we've loved and lost right now and with the idea that we'll all be together again someday, laughing and talking about old times.

There are also other hopes upon which I've been reflecting quite a bit in the last few days. I'm fully confident that she knew how much we all love her. Over the past few years of confusion, with her trapped in a slowly failing body and mind hopefully she understood somewhere down deep that everyone was doing whatever they thought best for her. Hopefully she also knew how unjust a sentence that was for someone who'd spent her life being there for everyone else. I hope my mom and aunts feel validated that the enormous amount of effort they put forward was recognized and appreciated. Now, going forward I hope everyone's in a better place.

I was incredibly fortunate to have the amount of time with her that I did. Some people never get to meet their grandparents at all. Nonie and I got to share 39 years together and a special bond. She gave our family structure and she gave us dreams. Now she's given us some very big shoes to fill. The night before she left I was in her hospital room with some of the rest of the family and she'd been in and out all night. When I got up to leave I held her hand and she opened her eyes and had the last moment of clarity I got with her. The last thing I said to her that I know she understood was, "I love you Nonie. I'll see you tomorrow," and she responded with, "I love you too." I did see her the next day but I never saw her awake again. I don't know what else could have been said that would have been a more appropriate last exchange, and again I'm thankful for that as well.



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I've had a lot of time to get used to the idea that Nonie wasn't going to be here forever. That being said, the last few days haven't been easy. It's taken a couple of hours and half a box of Kleenex to write all this out, but I really want anyone who reads this to understand the kind of person my grandmother was. What she's done for all of us and the life she's lived is so much more important than whatever sadness we're feeling over her loss. She's in a better place and having seen her struggle for the last few years part of me feels selfish for being sad that she's not here and miserable anymore.

So here's to you, Nonie. Thank you so much for everything. I love you, and I'll miss you, but I'm also glad you're free. Say hi to everyone up there for me, and I'll see you all again someday.



# Events


**Mildred Burns**

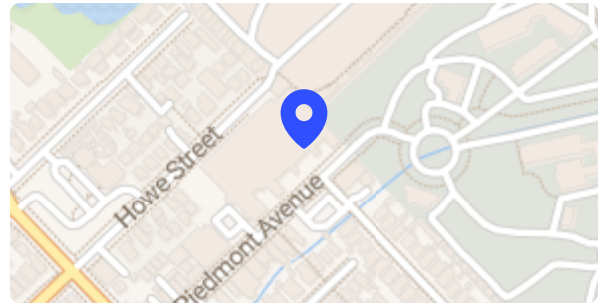
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## Visitation

 **Monday**, January 27, 2020


 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM PT


 **Chapel of the Chimes**  
4499 Piedmont Avenue, Oakland CA

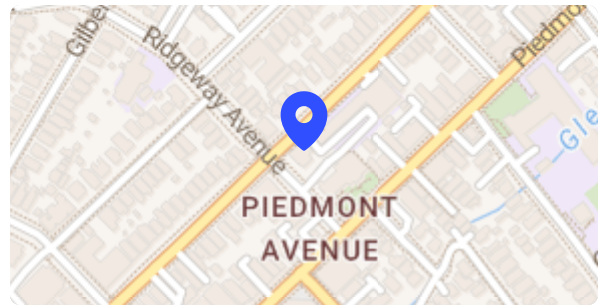


## Funeral Mass

 **Tuesday**, January 28, 2020

 10:00 AM PT

 **Church of Saint Leo the Great**  
176 Ridgeway Avenue, Oakland CA 94611





## Tribute Wall

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**Anonymous** sent a Beautiful in Blue to the Burns family.



January 26 at 2:10 PM



## **Memories only last if you share them**

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



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