

# Westbrook

## Featured Resident

### Helen Burris



Helen Burris was born near Elmore City, OK. She was the oldest of six children. She grew up on a farm with her two sisters and three brothers. Helen lived quite a ways from town but did enjoy playing with the neighbor children when she wasn't helping with the housework and caring for her younger siblings. She rode a horse to the country school they attended. After graduating from Elmore City High School, she remained at home and helped out for a couple of years.

In 1943, she moved to California to work in the shipyards. She got her license in welding and worked on building Navy ships. She caught the eye of a sailor named Charles Burris one evening while on a date with another young man. A week later, Charles asked her out and they started dating. They dated about six months and married in January of 1946. She continued to work until the war had ended. They then moved to Maryville, TN, where Charles had grown up.

Charles worked doing several different jobs over the next few years. In September of 1946, Charlotte was born followed by Bill in 1947 and Mick in 1948. Helen was a stay at home wife and mother. They moved to Michigan so Charles could go to work for Ford Motor Company. After about a year, they moved to Indiana and Charles started driving for Time DC out of Chicago. He was a long distance driver from Chicago to New York and other places. Charles would get two weeks vacation every summer and they would take the kids and go visit relatives in Tennessee, Texas and Oklahoma.

Over the next few decades, they relocated several times. They moved from Indiana to Liberty, MO; from Liberty to Denver, CO; from Denver back to Liberty and then Charles retired. They relocated back to Maryville, TN. By the time they moved to Denver, their kids were all grown up. So after eighteen years in TN, they relocated to Smithville, MO, in 1999 to be near their children and grandchildren. Charlotte had married Dan and they have two sons; Bill married Linda and they had a boy and a girl; and Mick married Faye and they had a son. Helen also has nine great grandchildren and two great great grandchildren.

Helen enjoyed quilting and crocheting until her hands wouldn't allow her to anymore. She crocheted lace dollies and tablecloths. She also made afghans and sweaters. When her children were growing up, she'd sew their clothes for them. She continues to enjoy reading the paper daily.

Charles was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2008. Helen cared for Charles in their home for six years. They finally had to move him to a care facility. After two weeks, he was moved to North Kansas City Hospital. He was there for two weeks before passing away in July of this year. Helen and her children put their house up for sell and it sold quickly. She moved here to Westbrook in August of this year. This year has been a very busy and transitional time for her. She says the best thing about living at Westbrook is the friendly people. She enjoys meeting and talking to new people. This is something that used to be hard for her but she has become much more comfortable with this in recent months.

Helen's words of wisdom to the next generation are to be an honest person and someone who is friendly.

*Everyone we have dealt with at Westbrook Care Center has been great. All the night and day night nurses have been exceptional!*

*– Samantha R.*

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