

Elizabeth Hortense (Burt) McKean  
October 7, 1919 – July 29, 2012  
dau . of Glen Burt & Gladys Hortense Kennedy

“Eagle Grove Eagle”, Thursday, August 2, 2012

## WE REMEMBER OUR LOVED ONES

### Elizabeth H. McKean, 92, Goldfield

Elizabeth H. McKean was born to Glenn and Gladys Burt on their family farm in 1919. She died 92 years later, surrounded by her family, of renal failure and pneumonia.

Elizabeth grew up on several different homesteads near Armstrong, Iowa. After graduating from Seneca High School in 1937, she worked as a hired girl, tending newborn babies for farm families. On her first job, an anxious father-to-be left Elizabeth alone with his pregnant wife so he could go and fetch the doctor. The child could not wait. Elizabeth called the experience a “real initiation.” Elizabeth was a consummate mother and caregiver throughout her entire life, as many well-fed strangers can attest.

In 1941, Elizabeth’s longtime beau, Merton, was drafted into the Army. World War II separated Elizabeth from the man she would later marry, but it also afforded her the opportunity to study to be a nurse’s aide at the University of Iowa. She went on to work at a clinic in Estherville. She later moved to Minnesota, where she both manufactured airplane parts “Rosie the Riveter”-style and cared for mentally-challenged girls as a

house mother.

In the winter of 1945, Elizabeth and a good friend left Minnesota for Los Angeles, where Elizabeth worked as a telephone operator. She never met a Hollywood star, even though she worked less than two blocks away from the big studios. That summer, she read in the newspaper that Merton’s unit was returning from Germany, so she transferred to the phone office in Spirit Lake. They married in February of 1946, at the Presbyteria minister’s house in Estherville.

The GI Bill allowed Merton to attend college, so in 1948 Elizabeth and Merton moved to Ames. Merton graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in civil engineering. In 1950, they moved to a farmstead near Armstrong where Elizabeth raised four children without running water, feeding her family from her enormous garden. In 1963, they settled in Goldfield. They worked together at Goldfield High School for over 20 years, Merton as a math teacher and Elizabeth as head cook.

In their retirement years, Merton and Elizabeth were both active in the Congregate Meals program. Elizabeth was a member of the

American Legion Auxiliary and the Presbyterian Church.

Elizabeth enjoyed painting, bird-watching and gardening. In the summers, she gently badgered family members into attending family campouts and Goldfield’s Fountain City Days festival, opening her home and her pantry to all. Elizabeth had a passion for genealogy, and spent much of her free time doggedly researching and cataloging her family’s history. She has now become a wonderful and colorful part of that history, and her story is now ours to tell.

Elizabeth was preceded in death by an infant brother; her husband; her brother, Jim; her sister, Helen; and her great-great-granddaughter, Ryver.

She is survived by her children Margaret (Leo) Johnson, Eileen Freeman, Charles (Patricia) McKean, and Helen (Richard) Goater; sister, Dorothy Thomas; brother, Joe Burt; and her numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Services will be held at the United Presbyterian Church in Goldfield on Sunday, August 5, at 1 p.m.

#### Corrections:

Father was Glen Burt – not Glenn

Daughter was Eilleen – not Eileen (officially Ruth Eilleen)