



## Maria Elena Combs

January 6, 1951 - November 1, 2025

### Maria Combs Obituary

Maria Elena Combs passed away on Saturday, 11/01/2025 following complications from open heart surgery. She was born on 01/06/1951 in Manila, Philippines and was 74 years old. She is survived by her husband of 51 years, Gary Combs of Sacramento and by three sisters, Rowena, Emily and Editha and one brother, Roberto, all in the Philippines along with numerous nieces, nephews and cousins. Both parents, Alicia and Rodrigo Maling are deceased.

Elena attended elementary school in Manila and then completed high school and college in Columbo, Sri Lanka where her father was a Philippine Diplomat for Cultural Affairs. She returned to the Philippines in 1972 and met her husband Gary there in 1973. He was a Peace Corps Volunteer visiting a friend when he met Elena. They were married exactly one year later. They moved to the United States in 1975.

In Bristol, Tennessee, Elena worked in a private doctor's office and then became a unit coordinator at the local hospital's emergency room.

The couple returned to the Philippines in 1985 and lived there for 3 years.

In 1988 they moved to San Francisco where Elena worked for Shriner's

Hospital for Children for 9 years as a unit coordinator. When that hospital closed in 1997, the couple moved to Sacramento where Elena continued working for the newly built flagship Shriners Hospital. She was the unit coordinator on the Pediatric Burns Unit for nearly 19 years.

Elena was very active as a volunteer, serving for several years as a counselor at the Sacramento Firefighters Burn Institute summer camp for burn survivors at Lake Tahoe. She also was a camp counselor at the Little Heros camp for burn survivors in Livermore. She assisted in fundraising events for the Burn Institute. She also volunteered with The Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors. Elena taught burn prevention to grade school classes of children who visited Shriners. She manned booths at community events teaching prevention there. She attended the yearly conferences of the ABA (American Burn Association) all over the country from New York to Texas to Vancouver, Canada. She assisted on burn prevention abstracts submitted to the ABA. She created an award winning burn prevention poster.

She accompanied a Shriners medical team that traveled to Mexico on a few occasions to treat children there.

Elena retired in 2016 and volunteered occasionally with the Burn Institute. She and Gary, also retired from state service, became home bodies catching up on movies and books and belonging to a gym. They previously traveled quite a bit in their 51 years together. They had visited several different countries overseas and had driven across the United States, touring especially the southwest states. She was always in touch with her family in the Philippines and provided as much assistance as possible in trying times. She loved them all dearly and completely. She was a skilled dancer, especially with native Filipino dances and Hawaiian dances.

Elena had a beautiful smile and laugh. She had a kind word for everyone. She

was sincere, sweet and gentle, never raising her voice in anger.

Her husband, Gary, misses her desperately.

"You danced through my life...your smile and laughter caressed my heart....your gentleness and kindness soothed my soul....your love made me know there is indeed a loving God out there."

Elena did not want a formal service. A priest was called to her side twice for Last Rites and for Passage to the Kingdom of God. She was anointed twice with the Holy Oil. Her large family in the Philippines performed the Novena and there was a Mass held for her. Her friends here and overseas have been notified of her passing. For other friends and co-workers who visit this site, please leave a note of sentiment/remembrance. This can be shared with her family here and in the Philippines.

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# Tribute Wall

GA

“ Hey Angel, Heaven's even nicer with you there!

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**Gary** - April 06 at 02:05 PM

RM

“ A candle was lit in remembrance

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**Rowena Maling** - April 04 at 10:29 PM

GA

“ Happy Easter Sweetheart. One of your favorite days.

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**Gary** - April 04 at 10:26 PM

DV

“ My sincerest and heartfelt condolences to all of the family and especially my Uncle Gary. So very sorry to hear this. ☐

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**Diane Withers Vicars** - January 17 at 01:34 PM