



## Elke Nissen Shihadeh

December 13, 1935 - January 15, 2014

Elke Marie Shihadeh née Nissen died Wednesday, January 14, 2014 at her home in Ardmore, PA. She was 78.

With her death, the world lost many of the secrets of hand bookbinding and restoration, a profession she practiced with her husband Fred H. Shihadeh from her early 20's for the rest of her life. Elke Shihadeh had a special expertise in the restoration of damaged papers of historical significance and personally restored the broadsides announcing the Declaration of Independence, as well as rare elephant folio editions of Audubon's original bird renderings. She was skilled in the art of making the hand marbled papers that graced the inner covers of the many books she hand-sewed as part of her restoration work.

Elke Shihadeh was born in Hamburg, Germany, in 1935 to Johannes Nissen, a federal bank employee and Else Minna Luise Nissen née Kohl. She attended school in Hamburg, ultimately graduating from the Wirtschaftoberschule in 1955 where her skill in foreign languages (English,

French and Arabic) led to her facilitating foreign correspondence at Frachtcontor Junge & Co.

She met her future husband, Fred H. Shihadeh, who was raised in Ardmore, PA. while visiting

her aunt and uncle in Germany. Fred was in the U.S. Army, stationed in Bremerhaven following

World War II. Fred fell in love with the artistry of hand bookbinding still practiced in Europe and

also fell in love with Elke. After their marriage in 1960, and Fred's apprenticeship with German

masters in bookbinding, Elke and Fred came to the United States and settled in Ardmore.

Elke and Fred returned to Germany and other countries in Europe every year to gain knowledge

and hone their skills, eventually becoming two of the few experts in the United States on the

bookbinding of rare books.

After Fred's death in 2004, Elke continued to work with books on a limited basis. She worked to

promote her husband's legacy with the establishment of a bookbindery in Historic Sugartown,

PA, using equipment from their workshop. She was an avid reader and learner and delighted in

exploring numerous subjects. Elke enjoyed her large flower and vegetable garden and renewed

her interest in creating art. She will always be remembered as a person who quietly and without

acknowledgment helped others around her, and has donated her estate to charity.

She is survived by her brother-in-law, Emil J. Shihadeh and his wife, Grace Shihadeh of

Ardmore, her sister-in-law Jacquelin Shihadeh, widow of Edward J. Shihadeh of Rhinelander,

Wisconsin and nieces Karen Schaufeld and Sandra Shihadeh, nephew Edward Shihadeh and

grand nieces and nephews Haley, Jacob, and Max Schaufeld, and Jordan Shihadeh, of

Leesburg, VA, and a cousin in Kansas.

Gifts in memoriam may be made to Doctors Without Borders, Oxfam America, and The Smile Train.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Elke was a rare individual. Her love of the good and devotion to Christ were a rare gift.* ”

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**Pat Noble** - August 22, 2021 at 07:30 PM



“ *Elke was a truly amazing woman, hearing of her passing makes me eternally sad. She was one of the nicest people I had ever met, and was lucky enough to know her since I was a small kid. She rented houses on my street. She was an amazing bookbinder specializing in restoring old historical documents. I will never forget her. I remember her laugh and jokes fondly and enjoyed the time I spent with her immensely going to flea markets and driving around with her. She had such a wonderful outlook on life and her gardens around her home reflected that. I just wish I had a chance to say Goodbye and Thank you for everything. Love Always, RJQS* ”

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**Richard** - January 30, 2014 at 09:13 PM



“ *Fall Fantasia was purchased for the family of Elke Nissen Shihadeh.* ”



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January 17, 2014 at 02:33 PM



“ *Beautiful Dreams* was purchased for the family of *Elke Nissen Shihadeh*.



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January 17, 2014 at 02:17 PM



“ *Your Light Shines* was purchased for the family of *Elke Nissen Shihadeh*.



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January 17, 2014 at 02:02 PM



“ *Loving Lilies and Roses Bouquet* was purchased for the family of *Elke Nissen Shihadeh*.



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January 17, 2014 at 01:52 PM