



## Claire M. Viverito

September 4, 1926 - October 7, 2020

Ethel Claire McGranahan Viverito

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Born to Raymond J. McGranahan and Ruth Mae Carpenter McGranahan, she went by Ethel for part of her childhood but switched to her middle name during her teenage years.

Her parents named her after her mother's brother, intentionally using the masculine spelling of Claire, instead of the then common female spelling of Clare.

Uncle Claire had died during the influenza pandemic of 1918. The tragic irony does not escape me.

She used to talk about the Victorian house she grew up in, but seldom spoke of her childhood. Going through her papers, I found out that she was in the choir, the band, and took part in play readings.

She couldn't wait to get out of tiny Bedford and head to the University of Cincinnati. Always very strong in math, she was accepted by UC as an engineering major. During the war, she attended the university and worked in the GE Plant building planes. A required class in statistics led to an elective course on marketing research. She found her true calling.

After graduating, she took a job with Burke. While there, she was part of the team that created the statistical formulae used when analyzing market research polls. These formulae are still used today.

She began her professional career in the late '40s. A time when most companies were pushing women out of the workforce and giving soldiers returning from war "their" jobs back. At that time, women weren't allowed to have offices, so her desk was in the secretarial pool. The men who reported to her automatically had offices, and when she needed to meet with them, it was always in their office. She still won their respect and

admiration.

At one company she worked for, only men could have rectangular trash cans. Women had oval ones. Mom's masculine spelling meant she accidentally got the wrong shape. It was scandalous! A disastrous calamity that went all the way up the chain of command. Eventually, a junior janitor took it away and replaced it with the proper receptacle.

Mom lived a bit of a nomadic lifestyle, working for General Mills in Minneapolis, Quaker Oats in Chicago, and Greyhound in Phoenix. She also started her own successful business while we lived in Phoenix. A.C. Nielsen recruited her to set up their Houston office. She found a career for me so I could finish out the school year. She opened the Houston branch, and when the school year was over, we moved to Dallas so she could organize that branch as well.

A year later, we were on the move again. This time, there had been a bit of a bidding war—two companies vying to get her to work for them. I was heavily lobbying for the company based in Tampa Bay. I wanted to live down by the water. The schools in Ohio were better. Off we went to Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1979. A company called Bases won, and mom remained with them until her retirement in 2005.

In 1988 she became a VP in their international division. She was responsible for training people around the world in the Bases Market Research model. She loved living in Italy but also enjoyed visiting and teaching people in South Africa and Cyprus.

In another act of irony, Bases merged with Burke, and mom ended her illustrious career at the same company where she got her start.

She was a badass who broke a lot of glass ceilings.

I don't recall her having a lot of hobbies before we moved to Cincinnati. She seemed consumed with work. Although she did socialize and play bridge.

Once back in Ohio, outside of work, she rediscovered a genuine love of gardening. She joined the local garden club in Springdale, Ohio, and became a very active member. The large backyard landscaped to include a good-sized vegetable garden and a lovely pergola covered deck filled with pots of fresh herbs and sunny flowers. She continued her association with the garden club after her move to Orlando, Florida, where she was not only President of the Lancaster Circle but also of the larger Orlando Garden Club for two terms as well. She was a flower show judge and studied for her Master Garden certification, but her failing memory prevented her from taking the final exam.

Another area of interest blossomed when she joined a Shaker Study Group. She enjoyed traveling to seminars and hiking around the grounds. Observing what was left and, in her mind, seeing what it had been.

Having been bitten by a large dog in her childhood, she never had a pet until her dog-obsessed daughter was born. Overcoming her fear out of love, she too came to love smaller dogs. One year while away at University, her wayward daughter brought her a tiny kitten. From that day forward, she had feline companionship, going so far as to take her cat back and forth to Europe with her. The employees in the Delta Crown Room would post a sign saying a cat was loose and then grill everyone who entered. Christine Linde, named after the character in *A Doll's House*, was the toast of the town, everywhere she went.

Claire remained in her own home until 2019 when the dementia she was living with made it dangerous for her to be alone. She moved to Conway Lakes in January. She felt safe and protected at the ALF.

Fifteen minutes from my house, I visited as often as I liked until March 12, 2020. I called and skyped and tried to keep her engaged, but slowly she lost her ability to speak. The next time I saw her was May 3rd when CL had a Parade of Hope. I went around the loop twice and got yelled at when I stopped to scream, "Hi," after I spotted her. Hundreds of people drove around that tiny loop in tears. Eager for the first glimpse of their loved one in two months.

I continued to call mom daily.

I ended all our calls with "I love you, Mom." The last time she answered back was mid-June. On June 29th, I received the first call that Covid had gotten into Conway Lakes. It would not be the last. On July 21st, they called to tell me Mom would be moving to a different room. Her current room was in the new "Covid Wing."

I continued to call and attempt to engage mom. I read nursery rhymes, sung songs, made up stories, and talked of memories. She had good days and bad ones.

Finally, on August 7, almost five months later, I got to see mom "in-person." Wheeled inside a tent enclosure, I shouted so she could hear me. She slept through most of the visit. My next visit was almost a month later, on her birthday. I sang Happy Birthday; she was very chatty and happy. The visit lasted about 25 minutes. During both tent visits, we

placed our hands against the plastic, an impossible attempt at personal contact.

On September 8, mom's nurse called to tell me that mom would be going off-site to see her eye doctor. Armed with a name, address, and appointment time, on September 9, I finally saw my mom and was able to hold her hand. The day I waited almost six months for had finally arrived. I hung out with her for over an hour. She never said a word, but she squeezed my gloved hand and wouldn't let go.

On September 22, I got the call I was dreading. Mom had a slight fever and had tested positive for Covid. In March, I had told friends I felt I would never see my mother in-person again and that Covid would kill her. Now I was panic-stricken and devastated. She never really developed a fever after that. Her oxygen levels were consistent. Her main symptoms were fatigue and a lack of appetite. No one could get her to eat; everything tasted awful. Fortunately, she would drink the Boost Protein Shakes and water, and she took her medicine, but other than that, she wasn't having any of it. I called every day for 12 days. Her vitals were always good; she was doing well, except for her appetite and fatigue. I worried about her weight loss. Worse things were to come.

On October 4th at 7 am, I got a call from her favorite nurse. Her oxygen levels had crashed.

Should they transport to the hospital and intubate? Mom and I had begun end-of-life discussions back in the '90s when she was traveling a world that was not always safe. I knew what she would have wanted, yet I still hesitated. Finally, I said, "No, make her comfortable." I asked to visit, and at 8:30 am, the arriving supervisor granted permission.

I woke Alex up and kicked him out of the house. I told him I was going to say goodbye to mom and that I would need to quarantine for two weeks. He needed to be gone before I came back home.

From 9 to 1, I sat next to my mother, an oxygen machine, a coughing roommate, and dingy medical equipment the only sounds. Mom drifting in and out of consciousness. Once again, I held her hand, told her I loved her, told her how well her favorite soccer team was doing, and how well all the dogs and her cat were doing. Occasionally she would weakly squeeze my hand. I was wearing an N95 mask, a face shield, gloves, and gown. I was nervous about contracting covid, but not even fear would prevent me from seeing my mom.

Four hours flew by, but at the end of the visit, mom was non-responsive. I stroked her forehead one last time, told her I loved her, and walked out of the room with tears streaming down my face, positive it was the last time I would see her alive.

I called every 4 hours for updates. Mom remained mostly non-responsive, still clinging to life.

At one point on Monday, her blood pressure was 64/39. Still, she clung to life. Tuesday morning at 8:40, a different nurse called me. I needed to get over there now, he said. I hadn't planned on going back. I wasn't sure I was strong enough, but I decided I had to go. I got all my things together and headed over to Conway Lakes for the final time.

I spent an hour with mom, but it was more than obvious she wasn't there anymore. I still talked to her. I told her I loved her, told her Orlando City was finally winning and should make it to the playoffs, I told her that she could let go if she wanted, that everything would be alright.

Then I stroked her forehead one last time and walked away.

At 8 am on Wednesday, October 7, I got the phone call. Mom had passed away at 7:45 am.

I loved my mom. Honestly, I won the mom lottery. For most of my life, it has been the two of us against the world. We had our difficulties, but through it all, she was my fiercest supporter, my best friend, my rock. In her time, mom was fearless, adventurous, and brilliant, but living with dementia altered the dynamic of our relationship. She became a fragile automaton that masqueraded as my mom, inside a ravening beast devouring her. It robbed her of her life, her mind, her memories, her essence. It left behind a husk filled with confusion and dread and fear.

Then along came Covid, and through the gross negligence and incompetence of a nonexistent Federal or State response, it killed her.

Arrangements are pending at this time.

The family of Claire M. Viverito invites you to leave a message of condolence on the Tribute Wall created in her memory.

# Comments

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“ Such a touching tribute. I have fond memories of working with Claire early in my career at BASES. She was a tough boss sometimes, but I can honestly say with gratitude that I learned more about market research working with her than with anyone/anytime else in my career. She was a constant amazement of all that she could do and accomplish. Thoughts and prayers are with you at this great loss.

Marla St Martin

Marla St Martin - October 18 at 02:23 PM

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“ I knew Claire through the Orlando Garden Club where we became friends. I was so glad to see a business woman take over the reins of the club, as it is a business, and she was able to put it on good footing. We commiserated about the obstacles sometimes put in her way, but she was diplomatic and capable and admired. I am so sorry for your loss. She didn't do things by halves and I'm sure that included motherhood.

Judy Lee

Judy Lee - October 15 at 11:14 PM

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“ I am so sorry for your loss. I did not have the pleasure of meeting your Mom at Garden Club but after reading about her I obviously missed getting to know a fascinating, accomplished and incredible woman. May she rest in peace and may your memories be a blessing.

Kathi Belich - October 15 at 10:54 PM

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“ What a wonderful tribute Mags! I knew some of her story but not all of it. She was a great pal and I will miss her. Cling to the memories - there are some great ones!  
Joanne

Joanne Mulinare - October 15 at 08:22 PM

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“ Heartfelt condolences to you and all who shared their lives and love with your mom, Mags. She raised a wonderful human being. May she rest in peace. XOXO Sue

**Sue Thompson** - October 15 at 05:15 PM

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“ I was one of Claire's PDs back in 1983. Reading what Maggie wrote reminded me of what all Claire accomplished in her life and the battles she took on to build her reputation and career at BASES and elsewhere. I am so sorry, Maggie, that she has passed. She thought the world of you and loved talking about you. Thank you for sharing this wonderful story of her life.

**Sheila Lundy** - October 15 at 05:13 PM

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“ 7 files added to the album Memories Album



**DeGusipe Funeral Home & Crematory** - October 15 at 10:20 AM