



## Claire Agnes Griffith

January 9, 1942 - May 25, 2024

Claire Agnes Griffith (née Hilenski), 1942-2024, was born in Boston, MA. She died in her sleep on May 25th in Chicago, IL of natural causes. She is preceded in death by her brother, Albert "Al" Hilenski and her dear friend and mentor Kathleen Miniken. Claire is survived by her daughter Terri (Serena Worthington) Griffith; cousin Stephanie Olejniczak (née Hilenski); nephew Albert Hilenski Jr.; and great-nieces and nephews, Casey, Emily, Hannah, and Jeremiah.

A devoted friend and neighbor, she will be missed by Karen and Paul Bartlow, Kathleen Hagemeister, Sherry Kennedy, Kelly and Wally Mercier, the Quall family (especially Martha who visited Claire every evening), the Regan family (Nuria, Bert, Emilia, Sofia, Grace), the Valluzzi family (Holly, Jeff, Cece, Lucy), and Donna Wirt.

Claire graduated from Brighton High School in Boston and studied nursing before entering the military. She was immensely proud of her Air Force service (Private First Class, 1962-1966), including her years as a Medical Service Specialist and Practical Nurse at the 49th Tactical Hospital at the Spangdahlem Air Base in Germany. She contributed to the book, "The Fly Girls Revolt: The Story of the Women Who Kicked Open the Door to Fly in Combat" by Eileen Bjorkman. The author used Claire's story in her book as an example of the issues and discrimination that women who served in the U.S.

military prior to the 1970s faced. As Bjorkman notes, Claire was one of the thousands of unsung heroes who served and paved the way for women of the next generation to serve under much more favorable conditions and with many more career choices and opportunities.

For the majority of her professional career, she was an administrator for Housing and Urban Development grants in Snohomish County. Claire was especially passionate about grants focused on creating and maintaining safe and affordable housing for women and children in need.

Claire moved from Everett, WA to Chicago five days before her death and was staying with her daughter and daughter-in-law until her new apartment was ready. In the weeks leading up to her unexpected but peaceful death, Claire had the unusual opportunity to say goodbye to each and every one of her friends, sort through a lifetime of belongings with her daughter, pack what she wanted for her new life in Chicago, and to close the door on her little green house on the hill. Given the beauty and finality of this send-off, no memorial will be held.

Claire's loved ones will remember her love squirrels, President Barack Obama, and neighborhood garage sales.

In accordance with her wishes, Claire's body was donated to the Anatomical Gift Association in the aid of scientific discovery. When study is complete, she will receive a military burial with an honor guard and be interred at Fort Sheridan National Cemetery in Lake Bluff, Illinois.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Claire's name to the Everett Animal Shelter: <https://www.everettwa.gov/148/Animal-Services>.

Arrangements by Inclusive Funeral Care, 773-318-1305 or [www.InclusiveFun](http://www.InclusiveFun)

eralCare.com.

# Tribute Wall

SW

“ 6 files added to the album Memories Album

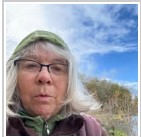


Serena Worthington - May 25, 2025 at 06:31 PM

KF

“ Kathy F. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Claire Agnes Griffith.

Kathy F. - June 04, 2024 at 11:01 PM



“ Three things Claire gave me:  
-If they can't love you all the way, keep looking  
-My mother was very proud of a work product  
-Use humor to forgive the Catholic church  
Simple but powerful  
Claire was an unsung hero  
I'm very sorry for your loss, Terry

Joan Miniken - June 01, 2024 at 09:07 AM



“ My sincere condolences to you Terri. Claire was a vital part of the Port Gardner Neighborhood and annually lead a team of neighbors to celebrate National Night Out Against Crime. Claire attended local meetings and volunteered often, she always provided coffee, tea and cookies at many meetings.

I had long talks with her on occasion and she was so in tune to life and living the best way giving and caring. She loved you dearly and always brought your name up in our conversations and all about your career in Chicago. One time I went over to her home to drop something off and she and her brother were there and I ended up being there for 3 hours! I guess we had a lot to talk about.

Claire was a prolific grant writer and I know she was sought out for her ability to write and obtain grants for non profits.

Claire's love for kitties was also well known and I met two of them over the years. She alway commented on a mutual friend's facebook page when he posts photos of his cat.

I wish you the best and know that your Mother made a significant impact on her friends and neighbors. Rip, Claire.

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**Andrea Tucker** - May 30, 2024 at 12:10 PM

LK

“ Oh, my! Claire moved to Chicago just a week ago, and I tried to text her a few days ago.

*I loved Claire as a neighbor and friend. I would stop by and stay to talk for an hour or so. She always had good counsel and was calm and a great listener.*

*Claire was a good neighbor. Many a neighbor would stop by to say hello and who benefitted from her generosity.*

*She was an early riser and would turn on her house lights so that the high school kids waiting for the school bus across the street would know they could come there if they needed help.*

*I knew her for 14 years and we had met at the monthly neighborhood meetings where she always brought the coffee and goodies to eat. She was also a*

*main organizer for Night Out Against Crime in our neighborhood.*

*The last time I spoke to her was a few days before she and her daughter flew to Chicago. She said good-bye and that they would come to visit in January.*

*I am so glad we got to go to the Secret Attic Tea Room. We chose our tea cups and each had a pot of tea. She could only tolerate the tea, bread pudding and a scoop of ice cream due to her illness, but she enjoyed our time together and the tea room's quiet, genteel atmosphere.*

*Claire attracted many, many friends to her. She said she liked people and found it easy to make new friends.*

*We will miss her greatly. She was looking forward to the new apt. that was waiting for her starting June 1 in Chicago, and being a volunteer, living close to her daughter and getting involved in the retirement home's many activities.*

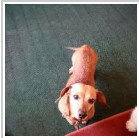
*And how she loved having a cat pet; she looked forward to adopting a cat once she settled in at her new home.*

*Claire had a patient and positive attitude toward life. There was only one moment when she wondered if she should after all get a cat, if she were to die: she didn't want the cat to be homeless.*

*How we will miss this kind hearted  
and generous sole.  
Rest in Peace. You  
lived a good life.  
Condolences to her daughter and  
her daughter's partner.*

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**Lembi Kongas** - May 30, 2024 at 10:12 AM



“ *Oh Terri I am so sorry to hear this. We had talked of plans to meet up at The Sisters restaurant for lunch. Then Covid hit and we never made the connection. I want you to know what a very important role your Mom played in my life. As a teenager she was a much needed and appreciated friend and support. May your wonderful memories comfort you during this difficult time. Claire truly was a very special lady. ❤️ Lisa Palm (Inman)*

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**Lisa Palm** - May 29, 2024 at 10:59 PM



“ *I delivered mail to Claire and Al in Everett for a couple of years. When Al passed, it was hard. Claire and I talked whenever I came by to deliver her mail. She always, ALWAYS had a smile. We talked politics, our military service. It was always a fun conversation. Eventually, I had to move north because the cost of living increased to where we could not afford the Everett area. She sent us listings and gave us leads to come back to the neighborhood for a quite a while. Unfortunately, they were all out of our price range so we never returned. Then Covid happened, and we lost contact, and to protect her I stayed away until it was over, but kept in contact with Facebook. She was very dear to me, and I am truly sorry she has passed. I am happy she was with family.*



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**Eldridge McFadden II** - May 29, 2024 at 10:41 PM

SW

“ 2 files added to the album Memories Album



Serena Worthington - May 29, 2024 at 09:55 PM



*I love these pictures. This is how I remember you two.*

Lisa Palm - May 29, 2024 at 11:01 PM

AS

*I love the Star Wars picture - my fun bluebird friend and her bad-ass mom, the first military woman and first single working mama I knew. She was always so welcoming. I remember hanging out endlessly in both of your RH houses, staying up late to watch old-school SNL episodes, your mom driving us places in a cute little green car, and a sweet dog (named McTavish?). I'm sad to lose another important piece of my childhood. Big hugs to you, Terri. ❤️*

Anne Senter - May 30, 2024 at 02:29 PM



“ 3 files added to the album Memories Album



Team Inclusive Funeral Care - May 29, 2024 at 10:17 AM



“ Although I didn’t know Claire for long, her presence left an indelible mark on me. Whenever she would visit Chicago to see Terri and Serena, she’d often be out on their balcony each morning, standing at the railing and gazing out at the street below. She would always give me a big, warm smile and a wave when she’d see me out there with my dog. It was a little thing, but it never failed to brighten my day, and I will miss those moments.

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**Bryan Shrode** - May 28, 2024 at 09:55 PM