



## Verna Marie Letizia

August 7, 1932 - February 3, 2024

### LETIZIA, VERNA MARIE

91, passed away peacefully Saturday, February 3, 2024 following a year long bout with bladder cancer. She is preceded in death by her husband of 60 years, Anthony “Tony” Charles Letizia (Died: Dec. 9, 2017). She leaves behind her 3 daughters: Antoinette (Ann) Frame (Lee Frame), Thaddia (Dina) Letizia (Kenneth Presson) and Micaela Letizia-Brunelle (Dennis Brunelle, Jr.); 5 grandchildren: Blake Letizia (Laura Letizia), Marissa Dashley, Savannah “Dirk” Frame, Ghabriel Letizia-Brunelle and Giordan Letizia-Brunelle; and 2 great-grandchildren: Anthony Letizia II and Paul Letizia; and one younger sibling, Wayne Taylor.

Verna was a bright light to so many in so many ways. She was the oldest child of Edith (nee Lalumondier) and Vernon Taylor who married at 16 and 17 years respectively. Edith, Vernon and Verna started life living on the banks of the Mississippi in a tent, but through hard work were able to buy a farm in Rolla, MO. Vernon was in the Navy and Edith was a seamstress. Edith and Vernon had 3 more children: Eric Taylor (USAF, ret), Sherry Butler and Wayne Taylor (USAF). At 4, Verna intuitively began playing the piano and won her first talent contest that same year. Verna’s parents divorced when she was 14, the same year she started working as a pianist for the Rolla School of Engineering Glee Club. At 16, she was heard and accepted at a Conservatory in Rolla for her natural ability. She graduated from Rolla Highschool in 1950. Unfortunately, though, after 2 fires at the farm, Edith, Verna and the younger siblings were

forced to move away from Rolla and the Conservatory to St. Louis to find work. That is when Verna began working as an Executive Assistant/Secretary.

Verna worked at several companies over the years including Gusdorf Law Offices, Bi-State Development Agency (15 years) and eventually retiring from St. Louis Community College Main Headquarters (25 years) downtown in 1996. In 1957, Verna met Tony, a “nice Sicilian boy from The Hill”. For Tony, it was love at first sight and the two talked all night long on the front stoop of her house. He told her that 1st night that he was going to marry her. With 20 legit proposals under her belt and a career, he had his work cut out for him, but through persistence and much love He succeeded his suit and they were married on May 30, 1959.

Throughout her time working her “day job,” Verna frequently sang with folks from the MUNY, The Collegians Chorus at The Rep and other popular venues in and around St. Louis as well as free-lancing. She was many times regaled as having a voice ‘like butter’ or having ‘a once-in-a-lifetime-type-of-voice that you heard if you were lucky!’ Professionals of the day were frequently at her home singing around the piano or she at theirs which ultimately erupted once again into more amazing jam sessions!!

Many also did not know that Verna was a very intuitive Special-Ed and Music teacher. When all her daughters were attending grade school, she worked firstly in the school office as secretary. Eventually, she was asked to teach music classes and then organize musicals when the music budget was slashed. She used these school musicals to raise money for the school and later for the St. Louis Psychiatric Rehabilitation Center located at 5300 Arsenal Street. With the funds raised over the years, the Psych Center was able to buy occupied lift vans for the residents with physical disabilities and many other necessities when the facilities ran short of funds. She later continued this tradition at Southwest Highschool when her oldest 2 daughters attended there.

At the grade school level, she was also enlisted to begin teaching the kids that

everyone else gave up on or that were considered “problem children.” Today they would be diagnosed as dyslexic, autistic or ADD, but those terms did not exist in the mainstream back then. She showed them how to read, focus and enjoy books and music. She was the first in the school to buy comic books on her own dollar to get the kids to start using these books as visual aids on the road to literacy. Some of these kids were up to 6th grade and still not able to read. These children grew up into grateful adults that many times stopped her out in public to say, “Thank you, Mrs. Letizia for not giving up on me and teaching me to read.” At least one of these “throw away kids” grew up to obtain her PhD in Astrobotany/Astrobiology; which is the study of plants in space environments and extraterrestrial vegetation discovery as well the growth of terrestrial vegetation in outer space by humans!

Everyone who came in contact with Verna was touched by her special empathetic, nurturing soul. From the CNA’s that called her ‘Grandma’ and came in on their days off to check on her, to nurses that stayed late to make sure her daughter, Micaela, wasn’t alone on the hospice “Death Watch”, to the laundress, the housekeeper, hospital valets, receptionists, drivers and on and on that visited her and cried in a place where death visits quite often. Verna spent her last 5 years happily and peacefully first at Friendship Village Independent Living and then Friendship Village Care Center.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

FEB 8. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Chapel Hill Mortuary - Kirkwood  
10301 Big Bend Road  
Kirkwood, MO 63122  
(314) 965-8228  
info@stlfuneral.com  
<https://www.stlfuneral.com>

## Funeral Mass

FEB 9. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

St Joseph Catholic Church Manchester  
567 St Josephs Ln  
Manchester, MO 63021

## Interment

FEB 9. 10:45 AM - 11:00 AM.

Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery

# Tribute Wall

NS

“ Verna must be thinking of me. After not hearing from her in years her name popped into my head and I was saddened though not really surprised to find her obituary. She was such a light in my life singing at St Anthony’s Parish in the choir. Our odd chance meetings at Walmart would turn into hour long catch up sessions! I’m not sure I ever told her how much she reminded me of my mom, but that she did! Wish we had met earlier in life! She was one of the world’s rare gems! I know I sang with Mica and met one of her granddaughters, both inherited Verna’s talents and kindness! Will remember all of you in my prayers!

Nancy Struckhoff - July 05, 2025 at 09:49 PM

ML

Just coming across this. Hi to you, Nancy. This is Micaela (Mica). She enjoyed talking with you and especially her time at St. Anthony's. Thank you so much for your kind words. ❤️

Micaela R Letizia-Brunelle - July 26, 2025 at 02:11 AM

JW

“ The Lord dropped in my spirit this evening to Google her name. I was saddened to read of her death. I came to know her, Tony and her daughters, and Blake when I worked with her at the college. She was a beautiful person with a beautiful family. I learned so much from her that has lasted through my life. Thank you Verna! 😊  
Rest well beautiful angel, sing well in heaven. Jackie Hurn-Wamack

Jackie Wamack - April 09, 2024 at 08:16 PM

ML

*Hi, Jackie! Micaela (Mica) here. Just seeing this. Oh, she loved you to pieces and would have enjoyed seeing you again. Take care and thank you for the kind words. She is indeed resting well in the arms of Jesus now. ❤️🙏*

Micaela R Letizia-Brunelle - July 26, 2025 at 02:15 AM

FF

“ *From, Scott Ermeling and family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Verna Marie Letizia.*



**From, Scott Ermeling and family** - February 07, 2024 at 06:15 PM

CC

“ *Colleen C. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Verna Marie Letizia.*

**Colleen C.** - February 06, 2024 at 09:37 PM