

After battling with respiratory problems, my Mum, Stella Maris (which means sea star), passed away today. My Mum was a complex woman, she did a lot of great things in her life but also some mistakes, as we all do. I choose to remember all the positives, and here is my personal summary of who was Stella Maris to me.



Mum had a tough upbringing because she lost her father at a very young age, and her mother faced many issues trying to raise her and her brother as a single mother, when she had never worked and only had my grandad's pension to lean on.

She met my father and married him at a very young age too, and had me first at only 19.

Mum was a very proud and exemplary primary teacher, who loved her job, but after having her second child had to give it away and stay home. My Dad and her had many relationship issues, and ended up separating when I was only 10.

The early 70s was a tough time to be a young single Mum in Argentina, nevertheless she gave it her best possible shot. She did everything she could, and after a few months she got a good income to support her and I. However, she felt incomplete and a failure as a mother, because my father had taken my brother with him when he went to work in another state (La Pampa). She missed my brother terribly, I did too.

That proved to be a cross too heavy for Mum to carry, and decided to move back with my Dad in La Pampa, made peace with him, and reunite her two children. A short time after that, she got pregnant with my other two brothers (twins), perhaps it was my parent's way to solidify their new relationship.

Mum became a housewife; she had now four kids to look after; but during that time she discovered a secret power she was not aware she had: she was an amazing and very prolific poetry writer.

When the family moved back to Buenos Aires, and my youngest brothers were old enough, she went back to work which gave me a lot of self-pride, she continued writing and published books, and also decided to learn how to read poetry out loud, to interpret it and delivery it to audiences as an artform. She loved that period of her life, working, writing, publishing, and running sessions to read poetry to delight others.

I moved to the United States around that time, she was saddened by that but hopeful it might be good for my career (IT) and my future. My second brother got married to his high school sweetheart, and moved out of the house, so Mum "lost" two sons in that period, but she gained a daughter in my second brother's new wife, and she had always wanted to have a daughter!

A few years later my second brother and his wife had their first daughter, and I had the great pleasure and honour to be asked by them to become her godfather. I decided to come out to my parents then, thinking there was so much happiness around that my "news" would not tarnish any of that ... I was horribly wrong. My Mum did not accept me for who I am at the start, it was hard for her strict Catholic upbringing but with the help of my father and lots of time, eventually she did learn to accept me as I am. Since then, she has been a wonderful support to me, my life challenges, and she even "adopted" all my three partners as her own sons, especially Michael whom she loves dearly.

By then, my second brother and his wife had their second daughter who brought a lot more joy to the whole family, specially to my Mum and Dad. But a few years later my Dad's health deteriorated and had to have a big heart surgery. Mum looked after him and his health through all surgery and recovery, trying to maintain all other professional commitments, but eventually the pressures of all that forced her to stop working.

Mum and Dad decided to sell their house in Buenos Aires, to buy an apartment nearby and a house in the suburbs with a bit of land, pool, BBQ, enough space for the whole family to run around. That was their retirement project and for a while it was so wonderful to them. However, Argentina's political and financial crisis turned on them, they lost the house in the suburbs and their retirement savings when banks collapsed. My dad never recovered from that; it was their dream that was crushed and he was powerless to change that. My Mum was there by his side, they cut their losses and focused on their family, that was all they could do.

A few years later Dad's health was bad again, I think the pain and embarrassment he felt after losing their house in the suburbs and savings was just too much for him. This time the health issues caused him his life. My Mum once again went through all that with him, and also with the four of us, supporting each one of us through the process.

Being alone after having lived a life with my father was extremely hard for her. It took her years to recover from his death but she did, she still had my younger brothers to look after and times were very tough as the settling of someone's estate in Argentina can take forever. Anyway, she managed to pull through all that too, with help from my three brothers and I.

My youngest brothers eventually moved out, one due to marriage which got my Mum her second daughter and later my Mum's two grandsons, Mum loved to spend time with them too, specially watching soccer games on TV together when her favourite team (Boca Juniors) played.

Those years were good for Mum as well, she started to take drama classes, and decided to extend her writing skills to learn to write short stories. Then, her health suffered a setback and almost died of an emphysema caused by almost 50 years of too much smoking. She was lucky and pulled through that, but recovery was slow and painful, the good news out of all that is that she finally quit smoking then. However, she ended with long term lung damage to live with the rest of her days.

She started receiving home care assistance, which allowed her to continue to live alone in her apartment for some time, but just a few years after we all got a visit from COVID-19 and that changed her life once again. She moved with my youngest brother, who took care of her since then and until now. That made it possible for her to survive the pandemic, as if she got the virus with her respiratory condition (pulmonary fibrosis), she would have died most certainly.

My youngest brother looked after her every need for many years since after COVID left, I think she loved living with him. Mum spent lots of quality time with him, my other two brothers, their wives and new partners, and their children and partners, and that gave her plenty to do with weekly gatherings, birthdays, holiday seasons, etc. She spent lots of time with Michael and I when visiting Argentina, always offered us her apartment to stay in, which is not far from my youngest brother's apartment where she was. Besides family time, she continued her course to learn to write short stories, and wrote many great ones. That period was tough on her due to health limitations, but overall I think she had so much happiness in her life. My other two brothers and I are in great debt to our youngest brother for all he did for her until her death.

Just a few weeks ago she developed a bronchitis, which was being treated but somehow evolved into a pneumonia, and ended in hospital in a very delicate state. For days, she fought as much as she could the congestion in her lungs, the virus, but it was too much for her this time. Her mind was still as clear as ever, and her will was strong as always, but her lungs could not handle the stress.

My Mum was a very special woman, my relationship with her had many ups and downs but for the last 20+ years has been wonderful, so I choose to ignore any issues we might have prior to that.



She was a fighter all her life, she was a teacher, a writer, a stage performer, a devoted "Peronista", a soccer lover ("futbol" as it's called in Argentina), a wife, a mother, a grandmother and just weeks ago a great-grandmother (my niece-goddaughter and her husband had a baby boy).

She was full of energy most of the time, she was "the life of the party" with friends and family, she was loved by everyone that had a chance to meet her. I feel she could have done so much more with her life, if her cards could have been different, she faced so many challenges and setbacks, but that was her path and she did the best she could with it, and that makes me so proud of her. For more than five years we used to speak daily on the phone ... I will miss you Mum. I love you Mum.

Raulito (28th May, 2026)