



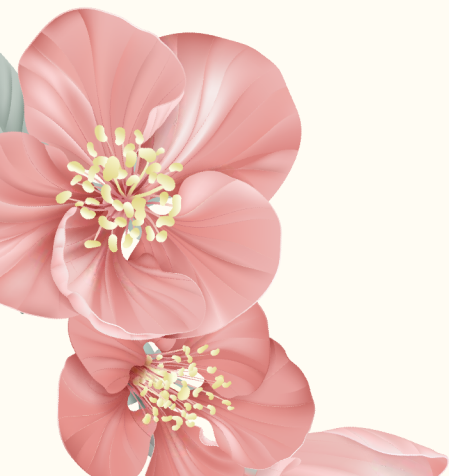
EULOGY



Virginia Glenna Holder

JUNE 12, 1929 - APRIL 22, 2021

written by
Enrico Downer



Eulogy

Virginia Glenna Holder

Born 95 years ago in 1929, Virginia (we all called her Glenna) left us three years ago but she continues to live in our hearts. In our memories. For me, not a day passes that I don't think about her, a remarkable woman, my dearest cousin.

I was honored when Gennia asked me to deliver this eulogy for her mother. I suppose it was because she knew that no one else alive knew her longer than I. And of course, my brother as well, since we grew up together in Barbados, in a little two-by-four house in a village named Grazettes where we lived together, Virginia and her mother, me and my brother. Naturally, her children got to know her more intimately than my brother and I but none knew her longer. In fact when I was ten or eleven I thought of Virginia as an elder sister until I learned she was my cousin, the daughter of my mother's sister a single parent who made sure we walked the straight and narrow as long as we were living under her roof. Her mother, my auntie, was a Christian woman and so was Virginia. Although I was not as devout as she was, we attended the same church, went to the same Sunday school, and prayed to the same God.

So now I would like to share a few stories about Virginia that no one else might be aware of. There is so much that I can tell because her life was so full, but I will try to keep it short.

First off, I would not be living here in this country if not for Virginia Holder. In fact, none of our family members would be here were it not for her, though they might not know it or might not want to acknowledge it.

You see, Virginia was the first one of us to come to this country. She was the one who paved the way for my mother, who in turn paved the way for my brother and me to do the same. As well as for my other relatives, my sister Sonia and my late brother Jimmy. She paved the way for us all. We all owe her so much.

Coming to this country I first lived with Virginia and her children, Gennia, Rhonda, Franklyn, and her husband, Irvine until I was able to join my mother and subsequently move out on my own. Yes, Virginia was the linchpin that was responsible for whatever successes we had in this country. I will never forget that.

Here's another story you might never have heard. Growing up in Barbados I became aware that my cousin was a very attractive young woman, one of the most sought after. I knew that from the number of eligible bachelors who kept buzzing around, one of whom was my schoolteacher at St. Stephen's school who never failed to make me head boy of his class every single year as a kind of leverage. I knew all the suitors, everyone. I could name them all but I suspect they are all gone now.

But Virginia was saving her heart for the one man she would really love, another gentle soul named Irvine Holder, who cared as much for her as she did for him. Together they raised three children, Rhonda, Gennia, and Franklyn in that order. And together Virginia and Irvine spared nothing to contribute to their children's upbringing. They gave them every blessed thing they could afford. And they favored none over the other. I know that I was there.

Most of us today remember her as the lady with the big heart, who gave and gave and asked for nothing in return. The kindest person I have ever known and the most generous. I am a witness to her generosity. So are the sick she helped to heal. So are the children she adopted or took in from parents who were unable to. She brought those children into her home in Hollis and Long Island and cared for them as she did for her own.

In 1989, she and Irvine moved to Florida but it was in their retirement years when some of us got to know her as the medicine lady. If you had an ailment all you needed to do was call Mrs. Holder and she would offer you some kind of homeopathic medicine that no one had ever heard of. But she did her research, she had a solution for every pain, every ailment. She knew them all. The last piece of advice she gave me for a pain in the joints was to take turmeric every day, what we called 'tumbric' in Barbados.

You might not know that Virginia after graduating from one of the two prestigious high schools in Barbados, the St. Michael's School for Girls she went on to study nursing at the General Hospital in Barbados. And that was where she developed that empathy for the sick she brought to America. A passion for healing.

I remember that in my early teens I developed some painful little boils on my legs that were quite embarrassing at school. My auntie tried every kind of topical ointment but nothing helped. And one night while I was half asleep I felt this sting on my leg. Virginia had brought home a penicillin catheter from the hospital and gave me a shot in the leg before I could say 'watch it'. Well the pox disappeared in no time; it was like a miracle. She knew exactly what I needed.

And then, after coming to America she became a registered nurse. I remember the days and nights she spent visiting the sick in Long Island. Sister Ruth Tucker would remember those days and nights.

And then in her husband's declining years, she took care of him before he too passed on, always caring for the sick and the helpless. And even when her own wellbeing was beset with illnesses of her own she devoted herself completely in caring for Franklyn who, as we know, had issues of his own. I remember she would tell me not to call her at certain hours of the day or the night because it was when she had to administer Franklyn's medications. I knew when to call and when not to call.

She told me once how she wondered who would take over Franklyn's care after she was gone. She would agonize over that. Little did she dream that Gennia, her second daughter, would be that one, another beautiful soul, who would make sure that Franklyn would not suffer as a consequence of his mother leaving this world. Gennia was the one who jumped right in and made the necessary arrangements for her brother's care. And from her place in Heaven I know that her mother is thanking Gennia for continuing the work she had to leave undone.

So in closing, I just want to say that there is no one on this planet who can truthfully say an unkind word about Virginia Glenna Holder. It is true that no one person is perfect but she came close to a perfect soul. If there is a Heaven, that's where she is resting in eternal peace.

We are fortunate to have had her in our lives.