



Vivian Chapman Elder

April 24, 1922 - September 15, 2024

Vivian Chapman Elder was born on the west side of Evansville, Indiana on April 24, 1922, she passed away surrounded by her loved ones after living a long fulfilling life.

As a small child Vivian would tell stories from the large colorful pictures in the family Bible. She loved to sketch, a talent that later grew into designing her own clothes. Her grandmother, Momma Neighbors, as Vivian affectionately called her, was an enormous influence in her life. She would always say, "If it can be done, you can do it." Vivian grasped this pearl of wisdom and held it dear throughout her life.

Being raised around seven uncles, Vivian became an exceptional athlete. She attended White School and then Howard Roosa where she was a member of the badminton and table tennis championship teams. She spent her summers in Kentucky learning how to ride, shoot and hunt from her Great Uncle. Within a few short summers her Uncle Tom said that she could shoot the whiskers off a gnat at 50 paces.

During her senior year at Reitz and the final game of the baseball season, Vivian hit a grand slam, rupturing her appendix, but still managing to make it to home plate, winning the game and landing in the hospital. After high school she took a job as a pick-up reporter for the Cleveland Labor Union Newspaper, she would fly by plane all around Indiana, Kentucky, and Illinois delivering and picking up news, and making deposits. She was recognized for having remarkably beautiful, long hair. At one time she modeled for shampoo

ads, which hung on the walls of barber and beauty shops.

When World War II broke out, she joined the Red Cross, completing nurses training; specializing in wound care. She had heard so much about the western United States that she told her mom she wanted to go. As the war ended, she bought a jeep and traveled around the western United States and Mexico, ending up at the Grand Canyon, working as a cashier on the reservation and living among the Havasupai Indians. She learned their ways and shared her Bible. A ninety-year-old Indian, Sammy, adopted her as his daughter, naming her "Fati La", or "Lazy Woman", because she couldn't leave the cash register and would ring a bell if she needed something.

After moving to New Mexico, she took college courses; one on how to care for livestock. She then landed a job as an accountant / ranch hand. Needing a horse, she was introduced to a rancher who was quite the horseman and would become her husband of 47 years, Enos Chapman. Together they bought a ranch and called it the Lazy K. They were a great team; breaking, branding, rounding up and driving their 1000 plus head of cattle and over 100 head of horses while sleeping under the stars on frigid nights during birthing season. Enos said that she was the best hand he'd ever had.

A few years later, they decided to sell their cattle and buy a horse ranch in Claude, Texas. She joined the First Methodist Church and taught the adult Sunday school class for almost twenty years. Her senior class grew from 17 to 37. During that time, she taught herself how to use fluorescent chalk and black light to tell biblical stories. From scripture, she would draw the scenes and with help from her mother, Thelma Branscum would tell the unfolding stories to attentive crowds in the dark.

Vivian also learned to paint China, earning two certificates to teach China painting from the International Porcelain Art Teachers of the United States. Even today, two of her pieces are in the New Mexico Governor's mansion. She had a refined taste for chocolates and also made excellent candy herself. A candy company from San Francisco respected her palate so much they would send her samples for evaluation.

Lots of guests throughout the years came to visit. She remembers her mother counting up all the youth that ventured to the ranch at different times for different reasons; forty-three in all. People who stayed more than three days were considered working guests. The ranch was a sanctuary, a welcoming place where no clocks were needed, just big open country, fresh air, rattlesnakes, and a strong back for the pressing chores you would gladly be helping with.

After two decades in Texas, Enos decided it was time to move on to a warmer climate, heading to the Percha Creek Ranch in Hillsboro, New Mexico. Vivian found a church and continued to use her God-given talent, presenting fluorescent chalk talks and programs at churches around the region.

Retiring in 1990 from ranch life, they moved to the town of Truth or Consequences. There, she was involved in the Pilot International Business Women's Club, holding various positions, and volunteered at the local Geronimo Springs Museum.

In 1996, they packed up and moved to Boerne, Texas where she continued her church and community involvement. In 2001 Vivian lost both her mother and her husband.

During a family visit to Evansville, Indiana, she met her future husband of 17 years, Herb Elder. While in Boerne, Vivian and Herb volunteered at the Rainbow Center for Seniors and were voted King and Queen of Kendall County. Together they traveled extensively around the United States.

After moving back to Evansville, they joined Howell General Baptist Church. Vivian continued to bless the church, family and friends with her programs. Her and Herb also volunteered at SWIRCA and More, playing in the Kitchen Band and serving food for over 12 years before Herb's death in 2020. She still volunteered after her 101st birthday.

In 2018, she was invited to a luncheon in her honor for being a member of the Shriner Eastern Star Friendship Chapter #32 for 75 years and passed her 81st year as a member.

Vivian often expressed her sincere appreciation for her friend and caregiver Sherri Hirsch and to family; Dave Elder, Jim Neighbors, Margie Cox and Lola Delaney for their time and compassion in her last years.

Vivian is survived by three step sons and a step daughter: Dave, Chris (Maureen), Justin (Karyle) Elder, Pam (Steve) Scott, their families and lots of beloved cousins who called her aunt. She was preceded in death by step son Mike Elder.

A celebration of Vivian's Life will be Thursday September 19th at Howell General Baptist Church, 1520 Delmar Ave., Evansville, IN 47712 with Pastor Terry Gamblin and Cliff Wheeler. Visitation will be from 2 to 4PM until service time at the church.

In lieu of flower, memorial contributions may be made to Howell General Baptist Church.

Cemetery Details

Tupman

Red Bank Road
IN 47720

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP 19. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

Howell General Baptist Church
1520 Delmar Ave.
Evansville, IN

Funeral Service

SEP 19. 4:00 PM (CT)

Howell General Baptist Church
1520 Delmar Ave.
Evansville, IN

Tribute Wall

CV

“ I dearly miss my Great-Aunt Vivian. I had hoped to make it up there to see her again. Now sadly I'll never see her again. I know Uncle Ennie and Herb are glad to see her again. I know she's up there riding those amazing horses her and Uncle Ennie raised. I wish someone had contacted me :(

Christy Grogan Vetter - December 19, 2024 at 01:31 AM

LD

So sorry for your loss. You must be on the Chapman side and we didn't know how to contact that side.

Lola Delaney - January 17, 2025 at 08:19 PM

SM

“ I met Vivian when I worked for S.W.I.R.C.A. She was truly a treasure. She and i loved to talk about Arizona and New Mexico where we both have lived. I Will truly miss her

Shelly Moore - September 20, 2024 at 02:54 PM

YF

“ Your Montgomery College PSHEM family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Vivian Chapman Elder.

Your Montgomery College PSHEM family - September 17, 2024 at 11:07 AM

YF

“ *Your Montgomery College PSHEM family purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Vivian Chapman Elder.*



Your Montgomery College PSHEM family - September 17, 2024 at 11:07 AM

SH

“ *I did not know Vivian personally. Just remembering her at SWIRCA. Bought flowers from her last year. Attended a birthday at SWIRCA for her also. She was always smiling....Will miss seeing her at SWIRCA. My sympathy to all of her family--especially her SWIRCA Family....Sue Hardesty.*

Sue Hardesty - September 17, 2024 at 07:43 AM

RM

*Forever in our Hearts
Rose. Mark Matthew and Gia
Marchisano* ❤️❤️❤️❤️

Rose Marchisano - September 17, 2024 at 07:56 PM

TF

“ *The Tate family! purchased the Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet for the family of Vivian Chapman Elder.*



The Tate family! - September 16, 2024 at 04:10 PM

TF

“ The Tate family! planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Vivian Chapman Elder.

The Tate family! - September 16, 2024 at 04:10 PM

DF

“ I meant Vivian while volunteering at Swirca. You would think that I had known her all my life! Every time she came in, she was so happy to see me. She always called me over to her and talked to me about how I was doing. And she did that with everyone! Vivian was a truly remarkable person, and all of us SWIRCA will deeply miss her.

Debra Forrest - September 16, 2024 at 02:22 PM

MJ

“ My darling aunt Vivian it will take me many lifetimes to repay all the beauty you gave me precious love I give to you

Marcia June Jones - September 16, 2024 at 10:24 AM

CR

“ Aunt Vivian was certainly an amazing woman. I remember as a child hearing stories about this wonderful relative that I couldn't wait to meet. When I finally did she was everything I hoped for. She was beautiful, brave and so caring and kind. She use to tell me how pretty I was and how proud my grandma Inez Neighbors was of me. She certainly touched so many people and will be missed.

Cindy Reitz - September 15, 2024 at 08:14 PM