

The following is a journal entry by Roda Vicuna's sister and our colleague, Olive.

Roda Vicuna was 46 years old when she passed on May 29 due to COVID-19. The 4th of eight children, she was addressed as "Ditse" by our siblings and at Kindred as my younger sister.

She was survived by her husband David and children Miguel or "Miggy", 25, and Abigail or "Abby", 15 years old. She was a former realtor agent for Coldwell Banker and was also the Manager in the Treasury/Tax/Banking Department of CKE (Carl's Jr.) Restaurants Holding for 20 years. While she studied nursing, graduating Valedictorian of the LVN program from Summit Career College in 2007. She also held a BS degree in Accounting in the Philippines.

She started her career in nursing a few years ago while holding a fulltime job at CKE. In 2019 however, the CKE offices relocated to a different state so she opted for a full-time career as a dayshift LVN at Kindred to provide benefits for her family. Never discussing her accomplishments, she just worked quietly, diligently, and tried her best to be a good nurse. With her experience at Kindred, nursing became a vocation instead of a means to an end. I saw how she took pride in making a difference in somebody's life: How a patient remembered her name or how they thanked her when she made them feel better. She often told me how much she liked working with the CNAs despite her bad knee and asthma. People complimented me on her hard work, her team spirit and her willingness to learn.

She was diagnosed with COVID on April 18, just 4 days after she last worked. The last time I saw her at the house, she was on her way to the hospital. It was the start of a surreal experience I'd

## IN LOVING MEMORY



*Roda Lea Lejarde Vicuna  
Licensed Vocational Nurse  
1973 - 2020*

To make a contribution to Roda's family, visit [gf.me/u/x6wmqk](https://gf.me/u/x6wmqk)

soon rather forget but can't. For weeks on end she fought valiantly against all odds. She endured so much and suffered for so long the physical pains brought on by COVID. Every day was a desperate attempt to find answers. I remembered calling the hospital day and night to see how she was, pushing for more trials even for ones not available at Kaiser. Buying time, looking for any sign of hope that she'll recover. Praying. Always praying. Doubting myself, am I seeing the glass half full? Or was it half empty?

The last time I talked to her was on April 25, my sister Yasmin's birthday, and the day Miggy was diagnosed with COVID, two days after David. As I tried to figure out how to isolate them at the house, Roda called and told me that she was going to be intubated. I heard the panic, the fear, the despair of knowing that she's running out of time. She was so short of breath that she was gasping between words and I had to tell her to stop. I remembered telling her, "Don't be afraid" as any "Ate" or older sister would say. I told her to be strong, that it's only temporary and just part of the treatment plan. I wanted to infuse her with hope, with faith. But how can one be strong for another when one is also gripped by so much fear?

The hurt of knowing my sister was alone with no family at her

side was heartbreaking. She was by herself in a roomful of machines, drips, and gowned up strangers that due to protocols for their own safety can't stay for more than a few minutes. Alone in a very lonely world. We just hoped that when we FaceTimed her, she heard us. That she recognized our voices despite her sedated state. We told her stories of everyday life, how she was missed, how everybody was waiting for her to get better. We didn't tell her that at one time, David and Miggy were both hospitalized at Kaiser with her. They were on the 4th floor, and she was on the 2nd floor of the COVID unit. They didn't get to see each other despite being in the same building. It was a very dark period in our lives. The possibility of losing three members of the family to COVID was unfathomable. We were quarantined at the house and dependent on other family members dropping off food and supplies outside our door. More prayers were said and answered, and eventually David and Miggy recovered and returned home. But Roda didn't. She was left behind. Highly sedated, still intubated.

On May 26, David and I were allowed to see her briefly when she almost coded. We thought we're going to lose her then, so I read all of my family's text messages while holding her hand. Geared up with PPE,

I could barely see through my tears and was hampered by my N95 and face shield. I told her how strong she was... how brave. Our parents in the Philippines didn't get to FaceTime her. We called them with updates and we thought Roda wouldn't want my parents to see her intubated. By the end of her life she was still taking care of them. The last time we FaceTimed Roda, we put our parents on the speakerphone and I believe my sister got to hear their voices for the last time. She passed away early the next day. They will never see their daughter again.

At 12:30 P.M., as she was being wheeled out of the hospital, she was given a Hero's Walk by the Kaiser staff and management. Their hands to their chest in salute to a fallen comrade. A nurse who despite the threat to her own health continued to work with pride in the face of a pandemic alongside the brave men and women of the healthcare industry. We, the family, who were allowed to see her for the last time wore our uniforms in her honor. Earlier that day I had asked the Kindred employees working to pause and give a moment of silence at the same time to mirror the Hero's Walk happening miles away. For our loss is also their loss. Her name is Roda. A nurse. A hero. My hero.

When we took home her belongings from the hospital after she died, we found handwritten letters addressed to her husband and children. They were folded and titled, "When I'm gone." The date was April 17 6 P.M. — the day she was tested for COVID.

In memory of my sister Roda, I am sharing this short journal of her fight with COVID 19. May we always be reminded how this disease devastates lives. I hope you find comfort and peace. This is our way to comfort you too. Let's start the healing process.