

= Geraldine Ferraro =

Geraldine Anne Ferraro (August 26 , 1935 ? March 26 , 2011) was an American attorney , a Democratic Party politician , and a member of the United States House of Representatives . In 1984 , she was the first female vice presidential candidate representing a major American political party .

Ferraro grew up in New York City and worked as a public school teacher before training as a lawyer . She joined the Queens County District Attorney 's Office in 1974 , heading the new Special Victims Bureau that dealt with sex crimes , child abuse , and domestic violence . In 1978 she was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives , where she rose rapidly in the party hierarchy while focusing on legislation to bring equity for women in the areas of wages , pensions , and retirement plans . In 1984 , former vice president and presidential candidate Walter Mondale , seen as an underdog , selected Ferraro to be his running mate in the upcoming election . Ferraro became the only Italian American to be a major @-@ party national nominee in addition to being the first woman . The positive polling the Mondale @-@ Ferraro ticket received when she joined soon faded , as damaging questions arose about her and her businessman husband 's finances and wealth and her Congressional disclosure statements . In the general election , Mondale and Ferraro were defeated in a landslide by incumbent President Ronald Reagan and Vice President George H. W. Bush .

Ferraro ran campaigns for a seat in the United States Senate from New York in 1992 and 1998 , both times starting as the front @-@ runner for her party 's nomination before losing in the primary election . She served as a United States Ambassador to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights from 1993 until 1996 , in the presidential administration of Bill Clinton . She also continued her career as a journalist , author , and businesswoman , and served in the 2008 presidential campaign of Senator Hillary Clinton . Ferraro died on March 26 , 2011 , from multiple myeloma , 12 years after being diagnosed .

= = Early life and education = =

Geraldine Ferraro was born on August 26 , 1935 in Newburgh , New York , the daughter of Antonetta L. Ferraro (née Corrieri) , a first @-@ generation Italian American seamstress , and Dominick Ferraro , an Italian immigrant (from Marcianise , Campania) and owner of two restaurants . She had three brothers born before her , but one died in infancy and another at age three . Ferraro attended the parochial school Mount Saint Mary 's in Newburgh when she was young . Her father died of a heart attack in May 1944 , when she was eight . Ferraro 's mother soon invested and lost the remainder of the family 's money , forcing the family to move to a low @-@ income area in the South Bronx while Ferraro 's mother worked in the garment industry to support them .

Ferraro stayed on at Mount Saint Mary 's as a boarder for a while , then briefly attended a parochial school in the South Bronx . Beginning in 1947 , she attended and lived at the parochial Marymount Academy in Tarrytown , New York , using income from a family rental property in Italy and skipping seventh grade . At Marymount Ferraro was a member of the honor society , active in several clubs and sports , voted most likely to succeed , and graduated in 1952 . Her mother was adamant that she get a full education , despite an uncle in the family saying , " Why bother ? She 's pretty . She 's a girl . She 'll get married . " Ferraro attended Marymount Manhattan College with a scholarship while sometimes holding two or three jobs at the same time . During her senior year she began dating John Zaccaro of Forest Hills , Queens , who had graduated from Iona College with a commission in the U.S. Marine Corps . Ferraro received a Bachelor of Arts in English in 1956 ; she was the first woman in her family to gain a college degree . She also passed the city exam to become a licensed school teacher .

Ferraro began working as an elementary school teacher in public schools in Astoria , Queens , " because that 's what women were supposed to do . " Unsatisfied , she decided to attend law school ; an admissions officer said to her , " I hope you 're serious , Gerry . You 're taking a man 's place , you know . " She earned a Juris Doctor degree with honors from Fordham University School of Law in 1960 , going to classes at night while continuing to work as a second @-@ grade teacher at schools such as P.S. 57 during the day . Ferraro was one of only two women in her graduating class

of 179 . She was admitted to the bar of New York State in March 1961 .

= = Family , lawyer , prosecutor = =

Ferraro became engaged to Zaccaro in August 1959 and married him on July 16 , 1960 . He became a realtor and businessman . She kept her birth name professionally , as a way to honor her mother for having supported the family after her father 's death , but used his name in parts of her private life . The couple had three children , Donna (born 1962) , John Jr . (born 1964) , and Laura (born 1966) . They lived in Forest Hills Gardens , Queens , and in 1971 , added a vacation house in Saltaire on Fire Island . They would buy a condominium in Saint Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands in 1983 .

While raising the children , Ferraro worked part @-@ time as a civil lawyer in her husband 's real estate firm for 13 years . She also occasionally worked for other clients and did some pro bono work for women in family court . She spent time at local Democratic clubs , which allowed her to maintain contacts within the legal profession and become involved in local politics and campaigns . While organizing community opposition to a proposed building , Ferraro met lawyer and Democratic figure Mario Cuomo , who became a political mentor . In 1970 , she was elected president of the Queens County Women 's Bar Association .

Ferraro 's first full @-@ time political job came in January 1974 , when she was appointed Assistant District Attorney for Queens County , New York , by her cousin , District Attorney Nicholas Ferraro . At the time , women prosecutors in the city were uncommon . Grumblings that she was the beneficiary of nepotism were countered by her being rated as qualified by a screening committee and by her early job performance in the Investigations Bureau . The following year , Ferraro was assigned to the new Special Victims Bureau , which prosecuted cases involving rape , child abuse , spouse abuse , and domestic violence . She was named head of the unit in 1977 , with two other assistant district attorneys assigned to her . In this role , she became a strong advocate for abused children . She was admitted to the U.S. Supreme Court Bar in 1978 .

As part of the D.A. office , Ferraro worked long hours , and gained a reputation for being a tough prosecutor but fair in plea negotiations . Although her unit was supposed to turn over cases which were bound for trial to another division , she took an active role in trying some cases herself , and juries were persuaded by her summations . Ferraro was upset to discover that her superior was paying her less than equivalent male colleagues because she was a married woman and already had a husband . Moreover , Ferraro found the nature of the cases she dealt with debilitating ; the work left her " drained and angry " and she developed an ulcer . She grew frustrated that she was unable to deal with root causes , and talked about running for legislative office ; Cuomo , now Secretary of State of New York , suggested the United States Congress .

= = House of Representatives = =

Ferraro ran for election to the U.S. House of Representatives from New York 's 9th Congressional District in Queens in 1978 , after longtime Democratic incumbent James Delaney announced his retirement . The location for the television series All in the Family , the district , which stretched from Astoria to Ozone Park was known for its ethnic composition and conservative views . In a three @-@ candidate primary race for the Democratic nomination , Ferraro faced two better @-@ known rivals , the party organization candidate , City Councilman Thomas J. Manton and Patrick Deignan . Her main issues were law and order , support for the elderly , and neighborhood preservation . She labeled herself a " ' small c ' conservative " and emphasized that she was not a bleeding @-@ heart liberal ; her campaign slogan was " Finally , A Tough Democrat " . Her Italian heritage also appealed to ethnic residents in the district . She won the three @-@ way primary with 53 percent of the vote , and then captured the general election as well , defeating Republican Alfred A. DelliBovi by a 10 @-@ percentage @-@ point margin in a contest in which dealing with crime was the major issue and personal attacks by DelliBovi were frequent . She had been aided by \$ 130 @,@ 000 in campaign loans and donations from her own family , including \$ 110 @,@ 000 in loans from

Zaccaro , of which only \$ 4 @, @ 000 was legal . The source and nature of these transactions were declared illegal by the Federal Election Commission shortly before the primary , causing Ferraro to pay back the loans in October 1978 , via several real estate transactions . In 1979 , the campaign and Zaccaro paid \$ 750 in fines for civil violations of election law .

Despite being a newcomer to the House , Ferraro made a vivid impression upon arrival and quickly found prominence . She became a protégé of House Speaker Tip O 'Neil , established a rapport with other House Democratic leaders , and rose rapidly in the party hierarchy . She was elected to be the Secretary of the House Democratic Caucus for 1981 ? 1983 and again for 1983 ? 1985 ; this entitled her to a seat on the influential Steering and Policy Committee . In 1983 , she was named to the powerful House Budget Committee . She also served on the Public Works and Transportation Committee and the Post Office and Civil Service Committee , both of which allowed Ferraro to push through projects to benefit her district . In particular , she assisted the successful effort of the Ridgewood and Glendale neighborhoods to get their ZIP codes changed from Brooklyn to their native Queens . Male colleagues viewed her with respect as someone who was tough and ambitious and in turn she was , as The New York Times later wrote , " comfortable with the boys " .

Ferraro was active in Democratic presidential politics as well . She served as one of the deputy chairs for the 1980 Carter @-@ Mondale campaign . Following the election , she served actively on the Hunt Commission that in 1982 , rewrote the Democratic delegate selection rules ; Ferraro was credited as having been the prime agent behind the creation of superdelegates . By 1983 , she was regarded as one of the up @-@ and @-@ coming stars of the party . She was the Chairwoman of the Platform Committee for the 1984 Democratic National Convention , the first woman to hold that position . There she held multiple hearings around the country and further gained in visibility .

While in Congress , Ferraro focused much of her legislative attention on equity for women in the areas of wages , pensions , and retirement plans . She was a cosponsor of the 1981 Economic Equity Act . On the House Select Committee on Aging , she concentrated on the problems of elderly women . In 1984 , she championed a pension equity law revision that would improve the benefits of people who left work for long periods and then returned , a typical case for women with families . The Reagan administration , at first lukewarm to the measure , decided to sign it to gain the benefits of its popular appeal .

Ferraro also worked on some environmental issues . During 1980 , she tried to prevent the federal government from gaining the power to override local laws on hazardous materials transportation , an effort she continued in subsequent years . In August 1984 , she led passage of a Superfund renewal bill and attacked the Reagan administration 's handling of environmental site cleanups .

Ferraro took a congressional trip to Nicaragua at the start of 1984 , where she spoke to the Contras . She decided that the Reagan Administration 's military interventions there and in El Salvador were counterproductive towards reaching U.S. security goals , and that regional negotiations would be better .

In all , Ferraro served three two @-@ year terms , being re @-@ elected in 1980 and 1982 . Her vote shares increased to 58 percent and then 73 percent and much of her funding came from political action committees . While Ferraro 's pro @-@ choice views conflicted with those of many of her constituents as well as the Catholic Church to which she belonged , her positions on other social and foreign policy issues were in alignment with the district . She broke with her party in favoring an anti @-@ busing amendment to the Constitution . She supported deployment of the Pershing II missile and the Trident submarine , although she opposed funding for the MX missile , the B @-@ 1B bomber , and the Strategic Defense Initiative .

While in the House , Ferraro 's political self @-@ description evolved to " moderate " . In 1982 , she said her experiences as assistant district attorney had changed some of her views : " ... because no matter how concerned I am about spending , I have seen first hand what poverty can do to people 's lives and I just can 't , in good conscience , not do something about it . " For her six years in Congress , Ferraro had an average 78 percent " Liberal Quotient " from Americans for Democratic Action and an average 8 percent rating from the American Conservative Union . The AFL @-@ CIO 's Committee on Political Education gave her an average approval rating of 91 percent .

= = 1984 vice @-@ presidential candidacy = =

As the 1984 U.S. presidential election primary season neared its end and Walter Mondale became the likely Democratic nominee , the idea of picking a woman as his vice @-@ presidential running mate gained considerable momentum . The National Organization for Women and the National Women 's Political Caucus pushed the notion , as did several top Democratic figures such as Speaker Tip O 'Neill . Women mentioned for the role included Ferraro and Mayor of San Francisco Dianne Feinstein , both of whom were on Mondale 's five @-@ person short list .

Mondale selected Ferraro to be his Vice @-@ Presidential candidate on July 12 , 1984 . She stated , " I am absolutely thrilled . " The Mondale campaign hoped that her selection would change a campaign in which he was well behind ; in addition to attracting women , they hoped she could attract ethnic Democrats in the Northeast U.S. who had abandoned their party for Reagan in 1980 . Her personality , variously described as blunt , feisty , spirited , and somewhat saucy , was also viewed as an asset . In turn , Mondale accepted the risk that came with her inexperience .

As Ferraro was the first woman to run on a major party national ticket in the U.S. , and the first Italian American , her July 19 nomination at the 1984 Democratic National Convention was one of the most emotional moments of that gathering , with female delegates appearing joyous and proud at the historic occasion . In her acceptance speech , Ferraro said , " The daughter of an immigrant from Italy has been chosen to run for vice president in the new land my father came to love . " Convention attendees were in tears during the speech , not just for its significance for women but for all those who had immigrated to America . The speech was listed as number 56 in American Rhetoric 's Top 100 Speeches of the 20th Century .

Ferraro gained immediate , large @-@ scale media attention . At first , journalists focused on her novelty as a woman and her poor family background , and their coverage was overwhelmingly favorable . Nevertheless , Ferraro faced many press questions about her foreign policy inexperience , and responded by discussing her attention to foreign and national security issues in Congress . She faced a threshold of proving competence that other high @-@ level female political figures have had to face , especially those who might become commander @-@ in @-@ chief ; the question " Are you tough enough ? " was often directed to her . Ted Koppel questioned her closely about nuclear strategy and during Meet the Press she was asked , " Do you think that in any way the Soviets might be tempted to try to take advantage of you simply because you are a woman ? "

The choice of Ferraro was viewed as a gamble , and pundits were uncertain whether it would result in a net gain or loss of votes for the Mondale campaign . While her choice was popular among Democratic activists , polls immediately after the announcement showed that only 22 percent of women were excited about Ferraro 's selection , versus 18 percent who agreed that it was a " bad idea " . By a three @-@ to @-@ one margin , voters thought that pressure from women 's groups had led to Mondale 's decision rather than his having chosen the best available candidate . Nonetheless , in the days after the convention Ferraro proved an effective campaigner , with a brash and confident style that forcefully criticized the Reagan administration and sometimes almost overshadowed Mondale . Mondale had been 16 points behind Reagan in polls before the pick , and after the convention he pulled even for a short time .

By the last week of July , however , questions ? due initially to reporting by The New York Times ? began about Ferraro 's finances , the finances of her husband , John Zaccaro , and their separately filed tax returns . (While the Mondale campaign had anticipated some questions , it had only spent 48 hours on vetting Ferraro 's family 's finances .) This was also the first time the American media had to deal with a national candidate 's husband . Ferraro said she would release both their returns within a month , but maintained she was correct not to have included her husband 's financial holdings on her past annual Congressional disclosure statements . The media also reported on the FEC 's past investigation into Ferraro 's 1978 campaign funds . Although Ferraro and Zaccaro 's finances were often interwoven on paper , with each half partners in Zaccaro 's company , Ferraro had little knowledge of his business , or even how much he was worth . Zaccaro did not understand the greater public exposure that his wife 's new position brought to their family , and resisted releasing his financial information . On August 12 , Ferraro announced that her husband would not

in fact be releasing his tax returns , on the grounds that to do so would disadvantage his real estate business and that such a disclosure was voluntary and not part of election law . She joked , " You people who are married to Italian men , you know what it 's like " , angering fellow Italian Americans .

The announcement dominated television and newspapers ; Ferraro was besieged by questions regarding the finances as well as criticism for ethnic stereotyping . As she later wrote , " I had created a monster . " Republicans saw her finances as a " genderless " issue that they could attack Ferraro with without creating a backlash , and some Mondale staffers thought Ferraro might have to leave the ticket . The Philadelphia Inquirer went even further in its investigations , seeking to link Zaccaro to organized crime figures , but most publishers avoided this topic and law enforcement officials did not treat the allegations with much seriousness . A week after her previous statement , Ferraro said Zaccaro had changed his mind and would indeed release his tax records , which was done on August 20 . The full statements included notice of payment of some \$ 53 @ , @ 000 in back federal taxes that she owed due to what was described as an accountant 's error . Ferraro said the statements proved overall that she had nothing to hide and that there had been no financial wrongdoing . The disclosures indicated that Ferraro and her husband were worth nearly \$ 4 million , had a full @ - @ time maid , and owned a boat and the two vacation homes . Much of their wealth was tied up in real estate rather than being disposable income , but the disclosures hurt Ferraro 's image as a rags @ - @ to @ - @ riches story .

Ferraro 's strong performance at an August 22 press conference covering the final disclosure ? where she answered all questions for two hours ? effectively ended the issue for the remainder of the campaign , but significant damage had been done . No campaign issue during the entire 1984 presidential campaign received more media attention than Ferraro 's finances . The exposure diminished Ferraro 's rising stardom , removed whatever momentum the Mondale ? Ferraro ticket gained out of the convention , and delayed formation of a coherent message for the fall campaign .

Sharp criticism from Catholic Church authorities put Ferraro on the defensive during the entire campaign , with abortion opponents frequently protesting her appearances with a level of fervor not usually encountered by pro @ - @ choice Catholic male candidates such as Mario Cuomo and Ted Kennedy . In a 1982 briefing for Congress , Ferraro had written that " the Catholic position on abortion is not monolithic and there can be a range of personal and political responses to the issue . " Ferraro was criticized by Cardinal John O 'Connor , the Catholic Archbishop of New York , and James Timlin , the Bishop of Scranton , for misrepresenting the Catholic Church 's position on abortion . After several days of back @ - @ and @ - @ forth debate in the public media , Ferraro finally conceded that , " the Catholic Church 's position on abortion is monolithic " but went on to say that " But I do believe that there are a lot of Catholics who do not share the view of the Catholic Church " . Ferraro was also criticized for saying that Reagan was not a " good Christian " because , she said , his policies hurt the poor . To defend Ferraro , the pro @ - @ choice group Catholics for a Free Choice placed an October 7 , 1984 , full @ - @ page ad in The New York Times titled " A Catholic Statement on Pluralism and Abortion " .

Ferraro drew large crowds on the campaign trail , many of whom wished to see the history @ - @ making candidate in person , who often chanted , " Ger @ - @ ry ! Ger @ - @ ry ! " Mondale and Ferraro rarely touched during their appearances together , to the point that he would not even place his palm on her back when they stood side @ - @ by @ - @ side ; Ferraro later said this was because anything more and " people were afraid that it would look like , ' Oh , my God , they 're dating . ' " .

There was one vice @ - @ presidential debate between Congresswoman Ferraro and Vice President George H. W. Bush . Held on October 11 , the result was proclaimed mostly even by the press and historians ; women voters tended to think Ferraro had won , while men , Bush . At it , Ferraro criticized Reagan 's initial refusal to support an extension to the Voting Rights Act . Her experience was questioned at the debate and she was asked how her three terms in Congress stacked up with Bush 's extensive government experience . To one Bush statement she said , " Let me just say first of all , that I almost resent , Vice President Bush , your patronizing attitude that you have to teach me about foreign policy . " She strongly defended her position on abortion , which earned her applause and a respectful reply from her opponent . In the days leading up to the debate , Second

Lady of the United States Barbara Bush had publicly referred to Ferraro as " that four @-@ million @-@ dollar ? I can 't say it , but it rhymes with ' rich ' . " Barbara Bush soon apologized . Ferraro 's womanhood was consistently discussed during the campaign ; one study found that a quarter of newspaper articles written about her contained gendered language .

On October 18 the New York Post accurately reported that her father had been arrested for possession of numbers slips in Newburgh shortly before his death , and inaccurately speculated that something mysterious had been covered up about that death . Ferraro 's mother had never told her about his arrest ; she had been also arrested as an accomplice but released after her husband 's death . The printing of the story led Ferraro to state that Post publisher Rupert Murdoch " does not have the worth to wipe the dirt under [my mother 's] shoes . " Throughout , Ferraro kept campaigning , taking on the traditional running mate role of attacking the opposition vigorously . By the end , she had traveled more than Mondale and more than Reagan and Bush combined .

On November 6 , Mondale and Ferraro lost the general election in a landslide . They received only 41 percent of the popular vote compared to Reagan and Bush 's 59 percent , and in the Electoral College won only Mondale 's home state of Minnesota and the District of Columbia . Ferraro failed to carry her own congressional district , which always tended to vote Republican in presidential races . Ferraro 's presence on the ticket had little measurable effect overall . Reagan captured 55 percent of women voters and about the same share of Catholic voters , the latter being the highest level yet for a Republican presidential candidate . Of the tenth of voters who decided based on the vice @-@ presidential candidates , 54 percent went to Mondale ? Ferraro , establishing that Ferraro provided a net gain to the Democrats of 0 @. @ 8 percent . Reagan 's personal appeal and campaign themes of prosperity and " It 's morning again in America " were quite strong , and political observers generally agree that no combination of Democrats could have won the election in 1984 . Mondale himself would later reflect that " I knew that I was in for it with Reagan " and that he had no regrets about choosing Ferraro .

After the election , the House Ethics Committee found that Ferraro had technically violated the Ethics in Government Act by failing to report , or reporting incorrectly , details of her family 's finances , and that she should have reported her husband 's holdings on her Congressional disclosure forms . However , the committee concluded that she had acted without " deceptive intent " , and since she was leaving Congress anyway , no action against her was taken . Ferraro said , " I consider myself completely vindicated . " The scrutiny of her husband and his business dealings presaged a trend that women candidates would face in American electoral politics .

Ferraro is one of only two U.S. women to run as vice @-@ president on a major party national ticket . The other is Alaska governor Sarah Palin , the 2008 Republican vice @-@ presidential nominee , whose ticket also lost .

= = First Senate run and ambassadorship = =

Ferraro had relinquished her House seat to run for the vice @-@ presidency . Her new @-@ found fame led to an appearance in a Diet Pepsi commercial in 1985 . She published Ferraro : My Story , an account of the campaign with some of her life leading up to it , in November 1985 . It was a best seller and earned her \$ 1 million . She also earned over \$ 300 @, @ 000 by giving speeches . She founded the Americans Concerned for Tomorrow political action committee , which focused on getting ten women candidates elected in the 1986 Congressional elections (eight of whom would be successful) . Despite the one @-@ sided national loss in 1984 , Ferraro was still viewed as someone with a bright political future . Many expected her to run in the 1986 United States Senate election in New York against first @-@ term Republican incumbent Al D 'Amato , and during 1985 she did Upstate New York groundwork towards that end . A Senate candidacy had been her original plan for her career , before she was named to Mondale 's ticket . But in December 1985 , she said she would not run , due to an ongoing U.S. Justice Department probe on her and her husband 's finances stemming from the 1984 campaign revelations .

Members of Ferraro 's family were indeed facing legal issues . Her husband John Zaccaro had pleaded guilty in January 1985 , to fraudulently obtaining bank financing in a real estate transaction

and had been sentenced to 150 hours of community service . Then in October 1986 , he was indicted on unrelated felony charges regarding an alleged 1981 bribery of Queens Borough President Donald Manes concerning a cable television contract . A full year later , he was acquitted at trial . The case against him was circumstantial , a key prosecution witness proved unreliable , and the defense did not have to present its own testimony . Ferraro said her husband never would have been charged had she not run for vice president . Meanwhile , in February 1986 , the couple 's son John had been arrested for possession and sale of cocaine . He was convicted , and in June 1988 , sentenced to four months imprisonment ; Ferraro broke down in tears in court relating the stress the episode had placed on her family . Ferraro worked on an unpublished book about the conflicting rights between a free press and being able to have fair trials . Asked in September 1987 , whether she would have accepted the vice @-@ presidential nomination had she known of all the family problems that would follow , she said , " More than once I have sat down and said to myself , oh , God , I wish I had never gone through with it ... I think the candidacy opened a door for women in national politics , and I don 't regret that for one minute . I 'm proud of that . But I just wish it could have been done in a different way . "

Ferraro remained active in raising money for Democratic candidates nationwide , especially women candidates . During the 1988 presidential election , Ferraro served as vice chair of the party 's Victory Fund . She also did some commentating for television . Ferraro was a fellow at the Harvard Institute of Politics from 1988 to 1992 , teaching in @-@ demand seminars such as " So You Want to be President ? " She also took care of her mother , who suffered from emphysema for several years before her death in early 1990 .

By October 1991 , Ferraro was ready to enter elective politics again , and ran for the Democratic nomination in the 1992 United States Senate election in New York . Her opponents were State Attorney General Robert Abrams , Reverend Al Sharpton , Congressman Robert J. Mrazek , and New York City Comptroller and former Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman . Abrams was considered the early front @-@ runner . The D 'Amato campaign feared facing Ferraro the most among these , as her Italian ancestry , effective debating and stump speech skills , and her staunch pro @-@ choice views would eat into several of D 'Amato 's usual bases of support . Ferraro emphasized her career as a teacher , prosecutor , congresswoman , and mother , and talked about how she was tough on crime . Ferraro drew renewed attacks during the primary campaign from the media and her opponents over Zaccaro 's finances and business relationships . She objected that a male candidate would not receive nearly as much attention regarding his wife 's activities . Ferraro became the front @-@ runner , capitalizing on her star power from 1984 , and using the campaign attacks against her as an explicitly feminist rallying point for women voters . As the primary date neared , her lead began to dwindle under the charges , and she released additional tax returns from the 1980s to try to defray the attacks .

Holtzman ran a negative ad accusing Ferraro and Zaccaro of taking more than \$ 300 @,@ 000 in rent in the 1980s from a pornographer with ties to organized crime . Ferraro said there had been efforts to oust the man , Robert DiBernardo , after reports of the tenancy originated during her 1984 vice @-@ presidential campaign , but he had remained in the building for three more years . In addition , a report by an investigator for the New York State Organized Crime Task Force found its way to the media via a tip from a Holtzman aide ; it said that Zaccaro had been seen meeting with the DiBernardo in 1985 . Ferraro said in response that those two had never met .

The final debates were nasty , and Holtzman in particular constantly attacked Ferraro 's integrity and finances . In an unusual election @-@ eve television broadcast , Ferraro talked about " the ethnic slur that I am somehow or other connected to organized crime . There 's lots of innuendo but no proof . However , it is made plausible because of the fact that I am an Italian @-@ American . This tactic comes from the poisoned well of fear and stereotype ... " On the September 15 , 1992 , primary , Abrams edged out Ferraro by less than a percentage point , winning 37 percent of the vote to 36 percent , with Sharpton and Holtzman well behind . Ferraro did not concede she had lost for two weeks .

Abrams spent much of the remainder of the campaign trying to get Ferraro 's endorsement . Ferraro , enraged and bitter after the nature of the primary , ignored Abrams and accepted Bill Clinton 's

request to campaign for his presidential bid instead . She was eventually persuaded by state party leaders into giving an unenthusiastic endorsement with just three days to go before the general election , in exchange for an apology by Abrams for the tone of the primary . D 'Amato won the election by a very narrow margin . The Ferraro @-@ Holtzman fighting of the campaign was viewed as a disaster by many feminists , but overall the 1992 U.S. Senate elections saw so many victories that it became known as the " Year of the Woman " .

Following the primary loss , Ferraro became a managing partner in the New York office of Keck , Mahin & Cate , a Chicago @-@ based law firm . There she organized the office and spoke with clients , but did not actively practice law and left before the firm fell into difficulties . Ferraro 's second book , a collection of her speeches , was titled Changing History : Women , Power and Politics and was published in 1993 .

President Clinton appointed Ferraro as a member of the United States delegation to United Nations Commission on Human Rights in January 1993 . She attended the June 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna as the alternate U.S. delegate . Then in October 1993 , Clinton promoted her to be United States Ambassador to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights , saying that Ferraro had been " a highly effective voice for the human rights of women around the world . " The Clinton administration named Ferraro vice @-@ chair of the U.S. delegation to the landmark September 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing ; in this role she picked a strong team of experts in human rights issues to serve with her . During her stint on the commission , it for the first time condemned anti @-@ Semitism as a human rights violation , and also for the first time prevented China from blocking a motion criticizing its human rights record . Regarding a previous China motion that had failed , Ferraro had told the commission , " Let us do what we were sent here to do ? decide important questions of human rights on their merits , not avoid them . " Ferraro held the U.N. position into 1996 .

= = Commentator and second Senate run = =

In February 1996 , Ferraro joined the high @-@ visibility CNN political talk show Crossfire , as the co @-@ host representing the " from the left " vantage . She kept her brassy , rapid @-@ fire speech and New York accent intact , and her trial experience from her prosecutor days was a good fit for the program 's format . She sparred effectively with " from the right " co @-@ host Pat Buchanan , for whom she developed a personal liking . The show stayed strong in ratings for CNN , and the job was lucrative . She welcomed how the role " keeps me visible [and] keeps me extremely well informed on the issues . "

At the start of 1998 , Ferraro left Crossfire and ran for the Democratic nomination again in the 1998 United States Senate election in New York . The other candidates were Congressman Charles Schumer and New York City Public Advocate Mark J. Green . She had done no fundraising , out of fear of conflict of interest with her Crossfire job , but was nonetheless immediately perceived as the front @-@ runner . Indeed , December and January polls had her 25 percentage points ahead of Green in the race and even further ahead of Schumer . Unlike the previous campaigns , her family finances never became an issue . However , she lost ground during the summer , with Schumer catching up in the polls by early August and then soon passing her . Schumer , a tireless fundraiser , outspent her by a five @-@ to @-@ one margin , and Ferraro failed to establish a political image current with the times . In the September 15 , 1998 primary , she was beaten soundly by Schumer by a 51 percent to 26 percent margin . Unlike 1992 , the contest was not divisive , and Ferraro and third @-@ place finisher Green endorsed Schumer at a unity breakfast the following day . Schumer would go on to decisively unseat D 'Amato in the general election .

The 1998 primary defeat brought an end to Ferraro 's political career . The New York Times wrote at the time : " If Ms. Ferraro 's rise was meteoric , her political career 's denouement was protracted , often agonizing and , at first glance , baffling . " She still retained admirers , though . Anita Perez Ferguson , president of the National Women 's Political Caucus , noted that female New York political figures in the past had been reluctant to enter the state 's notoriously fierce primary races , and said : " This woman has probably been more of an opinion maker than most people sitting for

six terms straight in the House of Representatives or Senate . Her attempts , and even her losses , have accomplished far beyond what others have accomplished by winning . "

= = Business career , illness and medical activism = =

In 1980 , Ferraro co @-@ founded the National Organization of Italian American Women , which sought to support the educational and professional goals of its members and put forward positive role models in order to fight ethnic stereotyping , and was still a distinguished member of its board at the time of her death . Ferraro was connected with many other political and non @-@ profit organizations . She was a board member of the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs , and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations . She became president of the newly established International Institute for Women 's Political Leadership in 1989 . In 1992 , she was on the founding board of Project Vote Smart . By 1993 , she was serving on the Fordham Law School Board of Visitors , as well as on the boards of the National Breast Cancer Research Fund , the New York Easter Seal Society , and the Pension Rights Center , and was one of hundreds of public figures on the Planned Parenthood Federation of America 's Board of Advocates . In 1999 , she joined the board of the Bertarelli Foundation , and in 2003 , the board of the National Women 's Health Resource Center . During the 2000s she was on the board of advisors to the Committee to Free Lori Berenson .

Framing a Life : A Family Memoir was published by Ferraro in November 1998 . It depicts the life story of her mother and immigrant grandmother ; it also portrays the rest of her family , and is a memoir of her early life , but includes relatively little about her political career .

Ferraro had felt unusually tired at the end of her second senate campaign . In November 1998 , she was diagnosed with multiple myeloma , a form of blood cancer where plasma cells secrete abnormal antibodies known as Bence @-@ Jones proteins , which can cause bones to disintegrate and dump toxic amounts of calcium into the bloodstream . She did not publicly disclose the illness until June 2001 , when she went to Washington to successfully press in Congressional hearings for passage of the Hematological Cancer Research Investment and Education Act . A portion of the Act created the Geraldine Ferraro Cancer Education Program , which directs the U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services to establish an education program for patients of blood cancers and the general public . Ferraro became a frequent speaker on the disease , and an avid supporter and honorary board member of the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation .

Though initially given only three to five years to live , by virtue of several new drug therapies and a bone marrow transplant in 2005 , she would beat the disease 's Stage 1 survival mean of 62 months by over a factor of two . Her advocacy helped make the new treatments approved and available for others as well . For much of the last decade of her life , Ferraro was not in remission , but the disease was managed by continually adjusting her treatments .

Ferraro joined Fox News Channel as a regular political commentator in October 1999 . By 2005 , she was making sporadic appearances on the channel , which continued into 2007 , and beyond . She partnered with Laura Ingraham , starting in December 1999 , in writing the alternate @-@ weeks column " Campaign Countdown " on the 2000 presidential election for The New York Times Syndicate . During the 2000s , Ferraro was an affiliated faculty member at the Georgetown Public Policy Institute .

In January 2000 , Ferraro and Lynn Martin ? a former Republican Congresswoman and U.S. Secretary of Labor who had played Ferraro in George H. W. Bush 's debate preparations in 1984 ? co @-@ founded , and served as co @-@ presidents of , G & L Strategies , a management consulting firm underneath Weber McGinn . Its goal was to advise corporations on how to develop more women leaders and make their workplaces more amenable to female employees . G & L Strategies subsequently became part of Golin Harris International . In June 2003 , Ferraro was made executive vice president and managing director of the public affairs practice of the Global Consulting Group , an international investor relations and corporate communications component of Huntsworth . There she worked with corporations , non @-@ profit organizations , state governments and political figures . She continued there as a senior advisor working about two days

a month .

After living for many years in Forest Hills Gardens , Queens , she and her husband moved to Manhattan in 2002 . She republished Ferraro : My Story in 2004 , with a postscript summarizing her life in the twenty years since the campaign .

Ferraro was a member of the board of directors of Goodrich Petroleum beginning in August 2003 . She was also a board member for New York Bancorp in the 1990s .

Ferraro became a principal in the government relations practice of the Blank Rome law firm in February 2007 , working both in New York and Washington about two days a week in their lobbying and communications activities . As she passed the age of 70 , she was thankful for still being alive , and said " This is about as retired as I get , which is part time , " and that if she fully retired , she would " go nuts " .

= = 2008 presidential campaign involvement = =

In December 2006 , Ferraro announced her support for Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton . Later , she vowed to help defend Clinton from being " swiftboated " in a manner akin to 2004 presidential candidate John Kerry . She assisted with fundraising by assuming an honorary post on the finance committee for Clinton 's 2008 presidential campaign . A heated nomination battle emerged between Clinton and Barack Obama , in which racial dust @-@ ups caused by perceptions of remarks made by campaign surrogates took place . Ferraro became livid when her daughter voted for Obama in a primary , which reflected a generational difference among American women in how they viewed the significance of a woman being elected president .

In March 2008 she gave an interview with the Daily Breeze in which she said : " If Obama was a white man , he would not be in this position . And if he was a woman (of any color) he would not be in this position . He happens to be very lucky to be who he is . And the country is caught up in the concept . " Ferraro justified the statements by referring to her own run for vice president . Echoing a statement she wrote about herself in 1988 , Ferraro said that " I was talking about historic candidacies and what I started off by saying (was that) if you go back to 1984 and look at my historic candidacy , which I had just talked about all these things , in 1984 , if my name was Gerard Ferraro instead of Geraldine Ferraro , I would have never been chosen as a vice @-@ presidential candidate . It had nothing to do with my qualification . " Her comments resonated with some older white women , but generated an immediate backlash elsewhere . There was strong criticism and charges of racism from many supporters of Obama and Obama called them " patently absurd " . Clinton publicly expressed disagreement with Ferraro 's remarks , while Ferraro vehemently denied she was a racist . Again speaking to the Breeze , Ferraro responded to the attacks by saying : " I really think they 're attacking me because I 'm white . How 's that ? " Ferraro resigned from Clinton 's finance committee on March 12 , 2008 , two days after the firestorm began , saying that she didn 't want the Obama camp to use her comments to hurt Clinton 's campaign .

Ferraro continued to engage the issue and criticize the Obama campaign via her position as a Fox News Channel contributor . By early April , Ferraro said people were deluging her with negative comments and trying to get her removed from one of the boards she was on : " This has been the worst three weeks of my life . " Ferraro stated in mid @-@ May 2008 that Clinton had " raised this whole woman candidate thing to a whole different level than when I ran " . She thought Obama had behaved in a sexist manner and that she might not vote for him .

During September 2008 , Ferraro gained attention yet again after the announcement of Sarah Palin as the Republican vice @-@ presidential nominee , the first such major party bid for a woman since her own in 1984 . Palin mentioned Ferraro as well as Clinton as forerunners in her introductory appearance . In reaction to the nomination , Ferraro said , " It 's great to be the first , but I don 't want to be the only . And so now it is wonderful to see a woman on a national ticket . " Ferraro speculated that the pick might win Republican presidential nominee John McCain the election , but said that she was supporting Obama now due to his running mate selection of Joe Biden having resolved her concerns about Obama 's lack of experience in certain areas . Ferraro criticized the media 's scrutiny of Palin 's background and family as gender @-@ based and saw parallels with

how she was treated by the media during her own run ; a University of Alabama study also found that media framing of Ferraro and Palin was similar and often revolved around their nominations being political gambles . A Newsweek cover story detected a change in how women voters responded to a female vice presidential candidate from Ferraro 's time to Palin 's , but Ferraro correctly predicted that the bounce that McCain received from the Palin pick would dissipate . In a friendly joint retrospective of her 1984 debate with George H. W. Bush , Ferraro said she had had more national issues experience in 1984 than Palin did now , but that it was important that Palin make a good showing in her vice presidential debate so that " little girls [could] see someone there who can stand toe to toe with [Biden] . " McCain and Palin ended up losing , but regardless of the 1984 or 2008 election result , Ferraro said that " Every time a woman runs , women win . " Ferraro made a joint appearance with Palin on Fox News during the network 's election @-@ night coverage of the 2010 midterms .

= = Final year , death and tributes = =

Ferraro continued to battle her cancer , making repeated visits to hospitals during her last year and undergoing difficult procedures . Much of her care took place at Dana @-@ Farber Cancer Institute in Boston , where she also acted as an informal advocate for other patients . She was able to make a joint appearance with Palin on Fox News Channel 's coverage of the November 2010 midterm elections .

In March 2011 she went to Massachusetts General Hospital to receive treatment for pain caused by a fracture , a common complication of multiple myeloma . Once there , however , doctors discovered she had come down with pneumonia . Unable to return to her New York home , Ferraro died at Massachusetts General on March 26 , 2011 . In addition to her husband and three children , who were all present , she was survived by eight grandchildren .

President Obama said upon her death that " Geraldine will forever be remembered as a trailblazer who broke down barriers for women , and Americans of all backgrounds and walks of life , " and said that his own two daughters would grow up in a more equal country because of what Ferraro had done . Mondale called her " a remarkable woman and a dear human being ... She was a pioneer in our country for justice for women and a more open society . She broke a lot of molds and it 's a better country for what she did . " George H. W. Bush said , " Though we were one @-@ time political opponents , I am happy to say Gerry and I became friends in time ? a friendship marked by respect and affection . I admired Gerry in many ways , not the least of which was the dignified and principled manner she blazed new trails for women in politics . " Palin paid tribute to her on Facebook , expressing gratitude for having been able to work with her the year before and saying , " She broke one huge barrier and then went on to break many more . May her example of hard work and dedication to America continue to inspire all women . " Bill and Hillary Clinton said in a statement that , " Gerry Ferraro was one of a kind ? tough , brilliant , and never afraid to speak her mind or stand up for what she believed in ? a New York icon and a true American original . "

A funeral Mass was held for her on March 31 at the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer in New York , the site where Ferraro and Zaccaro had been married and had renewed their vows on their 50th anniversary the year before . Figures from local , state , and national politics were present , and Mondale and both Clintons were among the speakers . She is buried in St. John Cemetery in Middle Village , Queens , within her old congressional district .

= = Awards and honors = =

Ferraro was inducted into the National Women 's Hall of Fame in 1994 .

Ferraro received honorary degrees during the 1980s and early 1990s , from Marymount Manhattan College (1982) , New York University Law School (1984) , Hunter College (1985) , Plattsburgh College (1985) , College of Boca Raton (1989) , Virginia State University (1989) , Muhlenberg College (1990) , Briarcliffe College for Business (1990) , and Potsdam College (1991) . She subsequently received an honorary degree from Case Western Reserve University (2003) .

During her time in Congress , Ferraro received numerous awards from local organizations in Queens .

In 2007 , Ferraro received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Sons of Italy Foundation . In 2008 , Ferraro was the initial recipient of the annual Trailblazer Award from the National Conference of Women 's Bar Associations , and received the Edith I. Spivack Award from the New York County Lawyers ' Association . In 2009 , legislation passed the House of Representatives calling for a post office in Long Island City in Queens to be renamed for Ferraro , and in 2010 , the Geraldine A Ferraro Post Office was accordingly rededicated .

In the fall of 2013 , P.S. 290 in Maspeth in Queens was renamed the Geraldine A. Ferraro Campus .

= = Electoral history = =

Democratic primary for New York 's 9th congressional district , 1978

Geraldine Ferraro ? 10 @, @ 254 (52 @. @ 98 %)

Thomas J. Manton ? 5 @, @ 499 (28 @. @ 41 %)

Patrick C. Deignan ? 3 @, @ 603 (18 @. @ 61 %)

New York 's 9th congressional district , 1978

Geraldine Ferraro (D) ? 51 @, @ 350 (54 @. @ 17 %)

Alfred A. DelliBovi (R , Conservative) ? 42 @, @ 108 (44 @. @ 42 %)

Theodore E. Garrison (Liberal) ? 1 @, @ 329 (1 @. @ 40 %)

New York 's 9th congressional district , 1980

Geraldine Ferraro (D) (Inc .) ? 63 @, @ 796 (58 @. @ 34 %)

Vito P. Battista (R , Conservative , Right to Life) ? 44 @, @ 473 (40 @. @ 67 %)

Gertrude Geniale (Liberal) ? 1 @, @ 091 (1 @. @ 00 %)

New York 's 9th congressional district , 1982

Geraldine Ferraro (D) (Inc .) ? 75 @, @ 286 (73 @. @ 22 %)

John J. Weigandt (R) ? 20 @, @ 352 (19 @. @ 79 %)

Ralph G. Groves (Conservative) ? 6 @, @ 011 (5 @. @ 85 %)

Patricia A. Salargo (Liberal) ? 1 @, @ 171 (1 @. @ 14 %)

1984 Democratic National Convention (Vice @-@ Presidential tally)

Geraldine Ferraro ? 3 @, @ 920

Shirley Chisholm ? 3

United States presidential election , 1984

Ronald Reagan / George H. W. Bush (R) (Inc .) ? 54 @, @ 166 @, @ 829 (58 @. @ 5 %) and 525 electoral votes (49 states carried)

Walter Mondale / Geraldine Ferraro (D) ? 37 @, @ 449 @, @ 813 (40 @. @ 4 %) and 13 electoral votes (1 state and D.C. carried)

David Bergland / Jim Lewis (L) ? 227 @, @ 204 (0 @. @ 2 %) and 0 electoral votes

Democratic primary for the United States Senate , 1992

Robert Abrams ? 426 @, @ 904 (37 %)

Geraldine Ferraro ? 415 @, @ 650 (36 %)

Al Sharpton ? 166 @, @ 665 (14 %)

Elizabeth Holtzman ? 144 @, @ 026 (12 %)

Democratic primary for the United States Senate , 1998

Chuck Schumer ? 388 @, @ 701 (50 @. @ 83 %)

Geraldine Ferraro ? 201 @, @ 625 (26 @. @ 37 %)

Mark Green ? 145 @, @ 819 (19 @. @ 07 %)

Eric Ruano @-@ Melendez ? 28 @, @ 493 (3 @. @ 73 %)