

Celebration of Life Service



Gail Yvonne Johnson

Sunrise
January 23, 1936

Sunset
March 24, 2015

Service

Monday, March 30, 2015 - 11:00 a.m.

Clinton Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church

151 Broadway

Newark, New Jersey

Reverend Robert H. Taylor, Sr., Officiating

Order of Service

ProcessionalClergy, Family and Friends

Call to Worship Rev. Robert H. Taylor, Sr.

Invocation.....Rev. Betty Brower

Selection.....Mr. Devon Horton

Old Testament Scripture Proverbs 3:5-9

New Testament Scripture 2 Timothy 4:1-8

Prayer of Comfort.....Bishop Angela Shadd Kittrell

Selection.....Ms. Jennifer Bell

Acknowledgements/Resolutions

Reflections.....Children and Grandchildren

Praise Dance.....Yasmine and Imani Johnson

Obituary Ms. Diana Davis

Selection.....Mr. Keith Johnson

Eulogy Rev. Robert H. Taylor, Sr.

Closing Prayer/Benediction

Interment

Fairmont Cemetery
Newark, New Jersey

Obituary

She was the kind of woman that when her feet hit the floor each morning the devil said, "Oh crap, she's up!"

Gail Yvonne Johnson (nee Fulford) was born on January 23, 1936 at Newark Beth Israel Hospital to loving parents, the late Clarence Harold Fulford and Dorothy Louise (nee Foster). She was born at the "Beth" and peacefully passed into paradise at the "Beth" on March 24, 2015. Gail was the first girl grandchild and was adored by her grandparents the late Thomas and Bessie Foster. She was loved dearly by her aunt Janet, Alberta and Grace as well as her uncle Connell. Dorothy later married James T. Latta and to that union a son was born, Gregory E. Latta. Gail loved her little "big" brother and Greg was with her wherever she went.

Her early childhood education began at Monmouth Street School Newark, NJ. As a young teenager Gail was actively involved in many activities which included the Junior Leaguers, where she marched as a color guard. She was also a member of the Girls Scouts of America and later became a Girls Scout Troop Leader. Gail was a member of the Urban League of New Jersey and the Junior Elks. In junior high school she met and fell in love with her prince in shining armor, the late Samuel Leroy Johnson Jr. who at the time was working at Leo's Meat Market. Gail attended South Side High School where she joined and sung with the famous city chorus under the tutelage of the renowned Ms. Schneider. During her high school years she was known as "slicker Gail" because of her quick wit and sense of humor. She was a Bulldog to her heart and loved cheering for her brother, son and grandson when they put on the black and gold! Upon graduation from South Side High School, Gail and Samuel took their love to the next level and were united in wedded bliss on April 15, 1956. To this union seven beautiful children were born, Samuel Jamal L. III, twins Donna Janet and Denise Janice, Diane Yvette, Yvonne Carol, Theresa Louise and Darryl Vernon. Gail was a devoted wife and mother. Gail lost her prince in shining armor at the tender age of 36. She was suddenly faced with raising six children on her own. She later shared, "Without a strong faith in God, I could have given up hope, rope and turned to dope". Gail loved her children and made each one feel special and unique. Each morning before her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren went to school, she would have them recite their name and state, "I am somebody". She always stressed family and Johnson Pride.

Gail was employed at an early age. As a teenager she worked with her cousin Joan at the NJ Division of Motor Vehicle. She also worked at Greystone Hospital, Boys and Girls Club of America Westside Unit and the Newark Pre-School Council. For over 35 years, Gail worked on the Essex County Board of Elections as an Official Challenger and an appointed member of the District Board. In 1973, Gail began her career in education, working more than 30 years at Alexander Street Elementary School in the Title One Program, as well as serving as the Community/Parent Liaison. Gail made an impact in the lives of thousands of students, who eventually became parents, and then their children. She was an advocate for all children and often wore several hats in order to meet their needs. Sometimes she was a teacher, social worker, counselor, therapist and mother for children. Gail would often make house visits to check on truant students, and connect parents with much needed resources. She was always doing something to improve the lives of her school and community. Gail would bring a barber and a beautician to school to provide free haircuts for the boys and grooming for girls each quarter. In addition, she conducted a yearly holiday drive and collaborated with local businesses to donate food and supplies to families for the holidays. She would bring a volunteer Santa Claus to hand out gifts to students who might not otherwise receive them at Christmas. There were times when Gail's children would notice their coats, clothes and shoes missing because she had given them to students in need. Gail was the consummate professional and had a way with even the most difficult parents. She was always able to understand their perspective, while helping them to understand the overall goals of the school. Gail would often remind parents, "You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar". Gail gave the children and parents of the community hope, and she understood without question, learning is relational before educational. She had the uncanny ability to remember students and parents by their first and last name. It amazed them when she would call them by their full name years later. While employed at Alexander Street Elementary School, Gail completed courses at Rutgers University Center for Community Education School of Social Work, where she received certification in Social Work and Community Leadership. In 2003 she retired from the Newark Public School System, but continued as a Teacher Aide at Avon Avenue School. Gail's passion for helping others remained unrelenting. She expertly served as a Case Manager with the West Ward Collaborative. In this capacity, she coordinated with businesses and religious organizations to provide much needed services, farm fresh food, employment and shelter for her clients in the West

Ward. Even after she left the collaborative, she continued to work with her clients, giving them her personal phone number to contact her.

Gail was recognized for her work receiving several awards including Dedicated Service to the Community and Students of Alexander Street School in 1985, The Church and Community Service Award presented by New Ephesus Baptist Church in 1989, 25 Years of Dedicated and Exemplary Service to the Newark Public Schools in 2000, Vailsburg Community Service Award presented by the Unified Vailsburg Services Organization in 2002, City of Newark Municipal Council Resolution for improving the quality of life for all people in 2002 and State of New Jersey Senate Resolution for meritorious record of service, leadership and commitment in 2002.

Gail was introduced to Christ at an early age by her grandmother, Bessie Foster. She would often stand Gail on the table at church and have her sing, "Jesus Loves Me" to the delight of the church members. She was a faithful member of Clinton Memorial AME Zion Church for 79 years. Gail was actively involved from the very beginning, winner of the first baby contest! Throughout her Christian walk, she served the Lord through many ministries. Gail served on the floral guild, the missionary society, the conference workers and finance committee. She also served as a Deaconess. Gail would often assist the Supernumerary in administering communion to the sick and shut-in parishioners. She was crowned Grandparent of the year on two separate occasions by the Jersey City District Lay Council. She loved her church and church family never missing a worship service until she became ill.

Gail was predeceased by her loving husband, twin daughters, grandparents, aunts, uncle, mother, father, step-father and brother. She leaves her children, Samuel Jamal L., Diane Yvette (Barry), Yvonne Carol (Osgood), Theresa Louise all of NJ and Darryl Vernon of MD; grandchildren, Terrence L. of PA, Hanifa Z., Jihad M., Jabril M., Jamal A., Imani J., Samiyah J., Asha M., Yasmine K. all of Newark. Shanta L., Shari R., Shavon M. all of CA, Sam-uel J. of CT and David A. of MD; twelve great grandchildren and one great-great grandchild all to cherish her memory and continue her legacy. She also leaves an aunt, Altarose Blanding of NJ, a loving sister-in-law and nephew, Diane and Brandon Latta of IL, devoted cousins, Ronald Mason of VA, Robbie Reaves of NC, Joan Johnson of GA, Angela Kittrell of VA, Stacey Foster of NJ and Rose DeLain of NJ, early childhood friends, Diana Davis, Lionel Robinson, Paulette Guess, Shirley Keyes and a host of other relatives and friends.

Footprints

One night a woman had a dream. She dreamed she was walking along the beach with the LORD. Across the sky flashed scenes from her life. For each scene, she noticed two sets of footprints in the sand; one belonged to her, and the other to the LORD. When the last scene of her life flashed before her, she looked back at the footprints in the sand. She noticed that many times along the path of her life there was only one set of footprints. She also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in her life. This really bothered her and she questioned the LORD about it. "LORD, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me." The LORD replied, "My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

Pallbearers

Ronald Mason	Samuel Jamal Johnson
Darryl Johnson	Jihad Johnson
Jabril Johnson	Jamal Johnson
Jabbar Johnson	Brandon Latta

Acknowledgements

The family would like to express their deep appreciation and sincere thanks for all acts of kindness shown to them during their time of bereavement.

Professional Services by:
Whigham Funeral Home

580 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Newark, New Jersey 07102
973-622-6872

Carolyn Whigham, Director

