



Home Going Service

Celebrating the life of

Rita Russell

Service

Tuesday, November 10, 2020 - 9:30 a.m.

Canaan Baptist Church

132 West 116th St.

New York, New York 10026

Obituary

Clarita "Rita" Rogers was born in Chester, Pennsylvania to Mayola Richardson Rogers and Francisco Rodriguez, later known as "Frank Rogers," on June 9, 1929. She was one of eleven children, six girls and five boys. She along with her ten siblings was raised and educated in Chester, Pennsylvania. She loved gospel and jazz music. She was always full of life and loved traveling outside of Chester to larger cities with her sisters. Her love for traveling, led her to Atlantic City, where she met the love of her life James Earl Russell. It was love at first sight! Only two weeks after meeting, Rita and James exchanged vows and wed in November 1950. As a young woman Rita, earned a living by waitressing at Chock-full-of Nuts and other Harlem restaurants once Rita and James relocated to Manhattan, New York.

In Manhattan, New York, Rita and James raised a total of 14 children: Arturo DeCardova, Pierre, Cyrus Michael, Andre, Tony, Denise, Amel, Angela, Rita, Mary, Valire, James Jr., Neeve, and Vincent. Rita remained married to her beloved husband, until he went on to glory on November 2, 1981.

Charismatic, witty, sly, funny, jovial, dynamic personality are just some words that come to mind when you think of Rita. There was never a dull moment when you were around her. She was animated and captivating, whether she was telling you about eating raw garlic to keep her blood pressure down, expressing the comfort of her black Reebok sneakers, or explaining her love for Pepsi and Snapple Iced Tea. She really drank Snapple like it was the best stuff made on Earth, and she convinced you of the same. Rita had a magnetic force, and people always gravitated towards her. She made friends wherever she travelled. People just opened up to her, sharing their entire life stories within moments of meeting her. Rita opened her apartment and heart to everyone. She always seemed to find space for you, even if she wasn't crazy about you. She had no reservations telling you, either. She had it honest. But even if she didn't like you, she always found a way to love you. Rita showered everyone with her love, in many different ways: sometimes it was by greeting you with a "Hello Gorgeous" or "You're so handsome," in her raspy tone, or reaching into her bra and slipping you some cash followed by, "Shh..now don't you tell anybody," or by convincing someone else to share their chopped Philly cheese sandwich with you. For many people, she displayed her love by allowing them to stay at her Harlem residence: 52 West 119th Street, Apt# 8, Manhattan, New York. Rita's residence became a revolving door and place of refuge for both relatives and strangers. She always found a way to make space for people and even their pets too. Rita always took care of the underdog, and their stray cats too. She had great compassion for people down on their luck. Her compassion for others and genuine desire to be surrounded by others made it hard for her to say "no." She always found a way to give, even when she had nothing left to spare. If you needed money, and she didn't have it, she was compassionate and clever enough to find a way to get you some. Her limitless love allowed her to give without ever expecting anything in return. She was free handed and generous with her food, money and love. For this reason, she was affectionately referred to as "Mommy," even by those who weren't related to her. Rita nurtured everyone like a mother, but she wasn't a pushover. She frequently voiced her mind. If she was annoyed with you, she did not leave you in the dark. She mastered the silent

treatment and would look off to the side and pretend like she didn't see you. But even in her silence, you felt her love. More importantly, she was always willing to forgive and welcome with open arms. Although she had a light-hearted spirit, and always loved a good laugh, Rita wasn't all fun and games.

Rita was an activist. Rita marched in the Civil Rights movement with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the famous "March on Washington." She was committed to fighting for racial, social and economic equality. She was a natural leader and pillar within the community. Rita took pride in her neighborhood and recognized the importance of civic duty. She spent countless hours volunteering within her community, and even took a leadership position within the Block Association. Additionally, she devoted time working as a poll worker for many years. She knew everyone in her neighborhood and knew everything that was going on too. She was nosey, but not without purpose. She always wanted to know what was happening. Often, this led to her being able to lend a helping hand. She volunteered and babysat kids on the block, rendered aid to assist individuals in the midst of an overdose, fed the hungry and housed the homeless. She listened to everyone and gave genuine advice. Even while volunteering, later on in life, Rita decided to work as a Home Health Aide to care for the elderly. Her patients admired her generous heart and wonderful smile. Indeed, Rita's hugs and juicy kisses provided comfort to many.

Rita was a woman with strong moral convictions and faith. She was serious about her relationship with God. She was active within her church community, including Kelly Temple where she served as an usher for many years. She loved to listen to gospel music. Her favorite gospel songs were: "Yes Jesus Loves Me" & "Amazing Grace."

Rita was charming, and could talk herself into or out of any situation. Rita was intelligent, and loved reading the newspaper to stay informed. Rita was the epitome of femininity: she took pride in her appearance, and loved a nice wash, press and curls. She never told her age. She loved to celebrate, and loved birthdays-especially hers. Rita opened her heart to everyone, and many owe her a debt to which they could never repay. On Friday, October 30, 2020, Rita was called to her reward. She leaves behind eight children to cherish her memories: Valire Guiden, James Amel Russell, Rita Russell, Angela Williams Jordan (husband David Jordan - who referred to her as "Queen Mother Rita"), Mary Russell-Lewis (husband Mentu Setepen Ra El), James Russell Jr., Vincent Russell, Neeve Russell, adopted daughter, Cassandra Howard Russell, siblings: Gary Rogers and Phyllis Williams. Additionally, she leaves behind 24 grandchildren, 25 great-grand children, and an abundance of nieces, cousins, and friends who will miss her dearly.

Lovingly submitted,
The Family

Order of Service

Officiating Minister.....Pastor David Francis

Opening Hymn.....Isrel Walker

Musician.....Anna Cauldwell

Prayer of Comfort.....Minister Elvatanza Hunt

Old Testament Scripture-Psalm 23Carol Bryant

New Testament Scripture-John 3:16-20.....Jason Lewis

Solo.....Isrel Walker

“Thank You Grandma” Poem.....Kaheem Russell

Obituary.....Jason Lewis

SoloIsrel Walker

Remarks from Family

Eulogy.....Minister Elvatanza Hunt

Final Viewing

Benediction

Recessional

Interment
Rosehill Cemetery
Linden, New Jersey









*"My Thank You Poem to Grandma"
By: Kaheem Russell*

*Thank you Grandma
For all the times as a kid you picked me up,
When I fell down,
For all the times you tied my shoes and tucked me in bed,
Or when you needed something but always put me first instead.*

*Thank you Grandma
For everything we shared,
The dreams, the laughter and the tears,
I'll always love you with a special love that deepens every year.*

*Thank you Grandma
Because I really feel very special
That God has chosen you,
to be the person in my life,
who knows me Thru and thru.*

*Thank you Grandma,
For all the times we shared talking,
I've always felt you heard,
You've been so good at listening
To each and every word.
And even things I didn't care to share,
You somehow heard them too.
I believe this was a special gift that God has given you.*

*So I wanna thank you again Grandma
For always being there for me,
And showing me acceptance,
And true motherly love totally.*

I love you always.

Rest in Paradise Grandma,

Your favorite Grandson Kaheem

Acknowledgements

The family wishes to express their deepest gratitude and sincere appreciation for all acts of kindness and comfort provided during this time of sorrow.

Funeral Arrangements Entrusted To
Perfect Peace Funeral Homes Inc.

2200 Clarendon Road
Brooklyn, NY 11226

Floyd W. Gilmore, President