



## A Letter From Heaven

When tomorrow starts without me and I'm not there to see;  
If the sun should rise and find your eyes all filled with tears for me.

I wish so much you wouldn't cry the way you did today;  
While thinking of the many things we didn't get to say.

I know how much you love me as much as I love you;  
And each time that you think of me, I know you'll miss me too.

When tomorrow starts without me, don't think we're far apart  
For every time you think of me, I'm right here in your heart.

- Alena Hakala Meadows

### Acknowledgement

Perhaps you sent a lovely card, or sat quietly in a chair. Perhaps you sent those beautiful flowers, that we saw sitting there. Perhaps you spoke the kindest words, As any friend could say. Perhaps you were not there at all, Just thought of us that day. Whatever you did to console our hearts, We thank you so much, from the bottom of our hearts

The Family

### Professional Services entrusted to:

Thornton Funeral Home, P.A.

3439 Livingston Road  
Indian Head, MD 20640

Ross-Clayton Funeral Home, Inc.

1412 Adams Ave  
Montgomery, AL 36104

### Interment

Fort Mitchell National Cemetery  
553 AL-165 | Fort Mitchell, AL 36856

(CDC - State of MD & AL COVID-19 protocols will be observed)  
Everyone MUST wear a mask & Practice Social Distancing

# Celebration of Life

## Dr. Johnnaye Mae Witcher

Sunrise

11/4/1933

Sunset

2/15/2021

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

Viewing: 11:00 am

Service: 12:00 pm

Thornton Funeral Home P.A.

3439 Livingston Road  
Indian Head, MD 20640



# Obituary

## Dr. Johnnye Mae Witcher

Johnnye Mae Murray Witcher of Accokeek, Maryland departed this life peacefully, on Monday, February 15, 2021. Born in Montgomery, Alabama, on November 4, 1933, she was the only child of the late James and Mattie Mae Murray. Johnnye was a scholar from an early age. Having been raised by a Grandmother, Ella Mae Robinson, who was only able to achieve a 4<sup>th</sup> grade education, education was the primary focus of her life and would ultimately become her life's work and greatest joy.

Johnnye accepted the Lord at an early age. While living in Montgomery, AL, she was a long time member of Revelation Baptist Church. She began attending as a young child with her Grandmother. Her relationship with the Lord was strong and unwavering. One of Johnnye's many accomplishments included playing the piano. She would go on to use her gift for the Lord, by playing for her church homes, Cole Chapel, and for other churches and organizations.

Johnnye Mae, graduated from Booker T. Washington High School in the spring of 1951. She then went on to begin her family's educational legacy, by being the first person to attend a school of higher learning, Alabama State College. While attending ASC, she became a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. She was a 1954 initiate of the Epsilon Beta Chapter. She graduated from Alabama State College in 1955, with a BS in English and Social Science. Johnnye immediately thrived as a Zeta. One of Zeta's founding principles of scholarship was close to her heart and she would go on to excel in her educational career by obtaining her Masters of Art (English) from Atlanta University, and her Ed.D in Curriculum and Instruction (Secondary Education and English), from Auburn University.

While working hard to complete her undergraduate degree, Johnnye married the great love of her life, Frederick Witcher Sr., on January 28, 1955. The two were childhood classmates. Although, the love was initially one-sided, Johnnye eventually fell for Fred's charm. Frederick was a member of the United States Air Force. To this union were born Frederick "Head" Witcher Jr. and Dierdre Valencia "Tweety" Witcher. Johnnye was preceded in death by Frederick in 1994.

The Witcher family began their exciting domestic and overseas travels in 1967, when they were stationed in the Philippine Islands. This experience was the first of many of their travels and adventures. They went on to be stationed in Texas and Virginia, where Johnnye continued her rewarding teaching career. Before moving back to Montgomery, AL, in 1977, they spent one last year in the Philippine Islands, where Johnnye spent her time working at the Exchange on the military's base. She enjoyed making new friends and meeting people from around the world.

Johnnye began her teaching tenure at Alabama State University as an English professor, where she was admired by faculty, students, alumni, and all. Her teaching style was poised and embracing. She cared deeply for her student's success and would push them to achieve the greatness that she saw in each of them. Her wisdom and guidance still rings in the hearts and minds of her past students and mentees to this day. She retired as the chairperson for the Department of Curriculum and Instruction after 35+ years of working in the field of education.

## We Will Miss You Forever

Granny's room is empty; she moved away.  
She departed this life and is gone to stay.  
There was no struggle, but with great ease  
she closed her eyes and took her leave.  
Our Granny was one sweet, loving soul.  
We had no doubt where she would go.  
We all knew Granny walked with God  
and bound for heaven to get her reward.  
No way we can know the lives she touched  
because that gracious soul gave so much.  
She would share her flour, sugar or meal  
or say a prayer to get your body healed.  
We had many talks as she sipped her tea.

She shared years of wisdom with us.  
She taught us family values and to be kind,  
but she always had Jesus on her mind.  
"You need the Lord," is what she would say.  
"You can't make it in this world no other way."  
Then Granny kneeled and bowed her head  
and a prayer she always said.

Our life is shaped by Granny's prayers,  
and we are thankful for her being there.  
Her love was evident in so many ways  
in her kind words and on her smiling face.

Granny's leaving is heaven's gain,  
but one day we will see her again.  
Because the Jesus that Granny knew,  
she made sure we got to know too.



*Love Always*

*Elysha*  
&

*Belinda*

*H Tribute To Our Sweet Granny*

# Scenes

## I'm Free

Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free  
I'm following the path God has laid you see.

I took His hand when I heard him call  
I turned my back and left it all.

I could not stay another day  
To laugh, to love, to work, to play.  
Tasks left undone must stay that way  
I found that peace at the close of day.

If my parting has left a void  
Then fill it with remembered joy.  
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss  
Oh yes, these things I too will miss.  
Be not burdened with times of sorrow  
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.  
My life's been full, I savored much  
Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.  
Perhaps my time seemed all too brief  
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.  
Lift up your hearts and peace to thee  
God wanted me now; He set me free.



## When Tomorrow Starts Without Me

When tomorrow starts without me  
And I'm not there to see;  
If the sun should rise and find your eyes  
All filled with tears for me.

I wish so much you wouldn't cry  
The way you did today;  
While thinking of the many things  
We didn't get to say.  
I know how much you love me  
As much as I love you;  
And each time that you think of me,  
I know you'll miss me too.

When tomorrow starts without me,  
Don't think we're far apart  
For every time you think of me,  
I'm right here in your heart.

## Dr. Johnnye Mae Witcher

In summer 1995 after the death of her beloved Grandmother, Johnnye sold her home at 219 Conrad Street, in Sheridan Heights. She moved to Accokeek, MD with her daughter and son-in-law. She enjoyed her retirement and stayed busy with new adventures. She joined Alfred Street Baptist Church where she enjoyed fellowship, services and the Pastors Aid Ministry. She also joined the Omicron Phi Zeta Chapter (Washington, DC) of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.

She was a pillar in her community as she taught the neighborhood children piano lessons over the years and held many annual recitals. She also spent her time traveling the world by air and cruise ship. She was a great cook and baker. She enjoyed baking sweet potato and pecan pies during the holidays and spending time with family and friends while sharing the awe-inspiring stories of her life. She was a true blessing to her family as she supported the rearing of her Granddaughters. She was the best do-it-all Grandmother they could have prayed for. She supported them with love, encouragement, prayer, and wisdom throughout their lives.

Her life was a living example of her favorite Bible verse, Ephesians 4:32 — "And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ." She was a gift to the world and all that knew and loved her. She was a wonderful story teller and had a beautiful laugh and smile. She was sassy, funny, smart and always exuded finer womanhood. She was selfless in all that she did for her friends and family. She enjoyed being a Mother and Wife. She was completely devoted to her family. She loved her children dearly and prayed for them fervently. She took great care of her husband when he fell ill and never married again after his passing. She was a wonderful woman of giving. Up until her passing she was still sending money to organizations in need. Her generosity was a blessing to so many people.

Aside from her great love and excitement for family, was Johnnye's unwavering love and support for ZETA! She was a trailblazer within Zeta. She served her sorority in many leadership capacities. She exhibited her devotion to Zeta Phi Beta Sorority and its ideals, as she held the national leadership positions of Chairman of the International Executive Board of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated, and as a member of the Board of Managers of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority National Educational Foundation, Inc. (ZNEF). In both positions, she helped guide operations and program policies. Her firm belief in higher education made her a strong advocate for the success of the ZNEF scholarship program in each of the leadership positions she held. She also served as both President of the Alpha Rho Zeta Chapter (Montgomery, AL) and as State Director of the Alabama State Association. On the Regional level, she was appointed and served as the 12th Regional Director of the South Central Region of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority. In 2019, in her reflections on her service as a member of the Board of Managers (ZNEF), she wrote "I served on the Board of Managers during the time that five of the Past International Presidents were Members. The enthusiasm and support that they brought were major factors in its growth, and set an example of support for all."

She is survived by her children - Frederick Witcher, Jr, California, MD (Agnes) and Dierdre Valencia Anderson, Accokeek, MD (Elijah); Grandchildren - Belinda D. Anderson, Accokeek, MD and Elysha Frederique Anderson, Accokeek, MD; and Great Granddaughter- Xiamara Indye Anderson-Hall, Accokeek, MD . Other Survivors include very special nieces Deborah Roberts-Muller, Cherry Hill, NJ (Ulysses) and Kissa May, Montgomery, AL; very special nephew Tyrone Sanders, MD; Sister in Law Margaret Gissendaner, Montgomery, AL, and a host of devoted relatives, friends, sorors, mentees, and church family

# Obituary

# Order of Service

## Order of Service

### Prelude

(Song) Take My Hand, Precious Lord, By Mahalia Jackson

### Processional

Rev. Barbara Florvil

Alfred Street Baptist Church

### Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. Burial Service

Omicron Phi Zeta Chapter (Washington, DC)

### Invocation, Remarks & Welcome

Rev. Barbara Florvil, Alfred Street Baptist Church

### Congregational Song

Near The Cross, By Mississippi Mass Choir

### Prayer of Hope

Rev. Barbara Florvil, Alfred Street Baptist Church

### Scripture Reading (Psalms 51)

Elysha F. Anderson, Granddaughter

### Song of Worship

Order My Steps in Your Word, GMWA Women of Worship

### Tributes and Reflections (2 to 3 minutes each)

Please offer any expressions of love or memories you have with Johnnye

### Song of Meditation

For Your Glory, Tasha Combs Leonard

### Poem

The House by the Side of the Road

Sam Walter Foss, Belinda D. Anderson, Granddaughter

### Obituary

Read Silently

### Congregational Song

The Battle is The Lords, By Yolanda Adams

### Eulogy

Rev. Barbara Florvil, Alfred Street Baptist Church

### Family Appreciation

Belinda D. Anderson, Elysha F. Anderson, Granddaughters

### Closing Hymn

Amazing Grace, By Aretha Franklin

### Prayer of Comfort

Rev. Barbara Florvil, Alfred Street Baptist Church

### Recessional

Now Behold the Lamb, By Kirk Franklin

## A Message from Omicron Phi Zeta Chapter

Omicron Phi Zeta Chapter, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. mourns the loss of a chapter Powerhouse, Soror Dr. Johnnaye Mae Witcher. Soror Witcher was a Golden Life Member and proud to have three Zeta Legacies - her daughter, granddaughter and niece.

Soror Witcher was a mentor to several chapter members and an advocate for Sorors who desired to be in leadership positions.

Soror Witcher was an active member and a pillar within the chapter. She was known for inviting and hosting Sorors of National Notoriety to participate at Omicron Phi Zeta Chapter Finer womanhood events. She shared invaluable experiences with the Sorors when she served as the Chair of the National Executive Board, Past Regional and State Directors, Past Undergraduate Advisor and other offices. Soror Witcher ensured that our chapter had the proper foundation and knowledge of protocols to be a premier chapter.

Soror Witcher was highly regarded within the Sisterhood, for her leadership from the State to the National level as well as with both undergraduate and Graduate Sorors. As she attended District of Columbia State Meetings and Eastern Regional Leadership Conferences, the leadership valued her expertise. Even though the common bond began with many as Sorors, many bonds of friendship and family were established. Soror Witcher was a confidant and loyal member while always displaying all of the principles of this illustrious sisterhood.

Our beloved Soror will truly be missed!



## Omicron Phi Zeta Chapter

# *Family Memories*



*A Teacher takes a hand, opens a mind and touches a heart.*

*School Days*

# Family Memories



# Family Memories