

Floral Attendants

Family

Honorary Floral Attendants

Mattie Booker Usher Board
Saint Philip Seniors & Retirees

Pallbearers

Nephews

Honorary Pallbearers

Bobby Kelly Usher Board

Thank You

I would like to give thanks to my special nieces, Esther Robinson, Destinee Caldwell, Wanza Bacon, and Jimmie Dukes for showing so much love, support, and dedication to me in my time of needed care. Thanks to John Leak and the staff of Grissom-Clark Funeral Home, Inc. for the support you have given my family.

Saint Philip AME Church Family
Bobby Kelley Usher Board
Richard Allen Church School
Hazelwood Neighborhood Club
Darnell Center Bid Whist Club
Foxy Few
Manor Care Decatur

Acknowledgements

The family of Mrs. Gracie Ruth Thomas Benjamin wishes to warmly thank you for your comforting words, monetary gifts, prayers, telephone calls, and genuine acts of kindness during this time. May you be richly blessed for your expressions of love.

Special Acknowledgements

A special thank you to Mr. Darrell Britton for taking exceptional care of our aunt. During a time when her health was failing and she was feeling sad, you brought her joy. For this, we will always love you. Praying for God's continued blessing upon your life.

John Leak
Grissom-Clark Funeral Home
227 East Lake Drive, SE, Atlanta, GA 30317 | 404-373-3191

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CELEBRATION OF LIFE

*Gracie
Ruth
Thomas
Benjamin*

OCTOBER 20, 1928 - JANUARY 6, 2023

Wednesday, January 11, 2023 | 11:00 A.M.

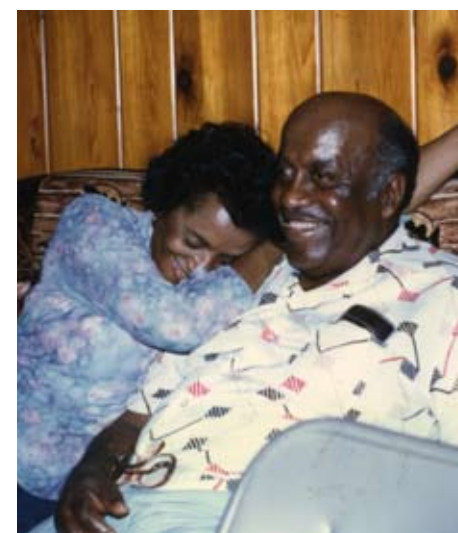
Saint Philip African Methodist Episcopal Church
240 Candler Road, Southeast | Atlanta, Georgia
The Reverend William D. Watley, Ph.D., *Senior Pastor*



"I love you and ain't nothing you can do about it."

IN REMEMBRANCE OF

*Gracie
Ruth
Thomas
Benjamin*



Gracie's Life Story

As Aunt Gracie finds herself in a new season of life, she is adjusting to being the care receiver and not the caregiver. So, this is Gracie's Life Story written by her nieces, but told by her, Gracie Ruth Thomas Benjamin.

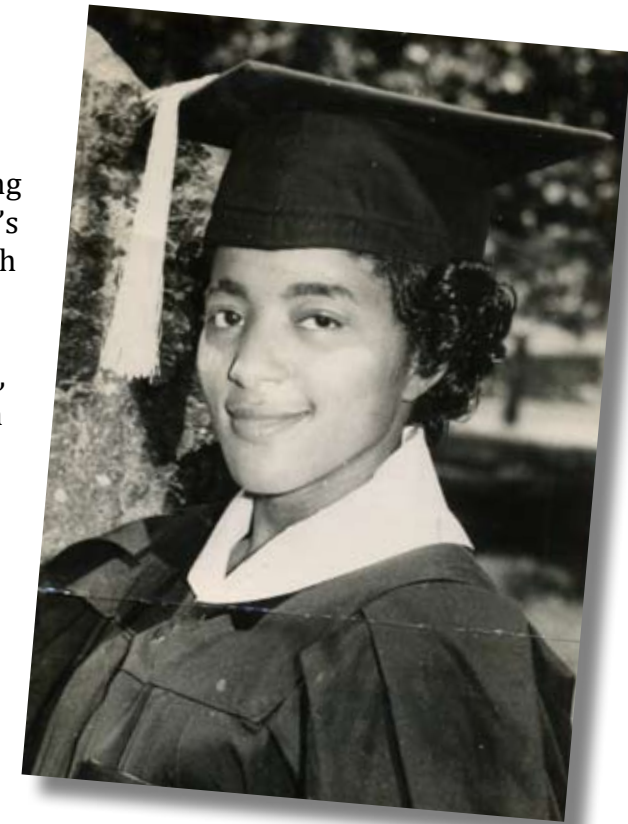
"I, Gracie Ruth Thomas Benjamin was born on October 20, 1928, to the parentage of Willie and Pauline (Clack) Thomas in Covington, Georgia. I was my mother's and fathers' thirteenth child of thirteen. Yes, I was the baby girl and the youngest. As God's plan would have it, my twelve siblings preceded me in death.

Newton County is where I was raised and started my formal education. After graduating from Conyers High School, I decided to further my education at the historic Morris Brown College in Atlanta, Georgia. I received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Early Childhood Education, with a concentration in Communication. Well, I did not stop my educational journey there, as I attended Governor's State University in University Park, Illinois. This is where I received my Master's Degree in Communication Science, once again placing emphasis on Communication. My thirty-plus-year career in education began in Eatonton, Georgia with the Putnam County School System where I taught for four years. As many progressive Blacks did, I relocated to Chicago, Illinois where I became an educator in the Chicago Public School System. I taught grades one through seven at Banneker Elementary. In this capacity, I served as a Reading Specialist and Classroom Educator.

My inaugural acceptance of Christ as my Lord and Savior occurred at the Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) in Mansfield, Georgia. Years later, I united with Popular Hill AME Church, Newton County, and Rock Temple AME Church, Conyers, Georgia. While living in Chicago, St. Mary's AME Church became my church home. I served in several positions such as president of the October Birth Month Club, St. Mary's Usher Board, Chicago Usher Organization, and the Steward Board.

Walter and I returned to Atlanta in June 1984. We united with Saint Philip AME Church. Here, I found many opportunities to use my diverse talents. I served on numerous Boards, groups, and organizations including the Mattie Booker Usher Board, Richard Allen Sunday School, Adult Ministry, ICUG, Stewardess Board, and was a Class Leader. Let's not forget, I was a member of the Saint Philip Deaconess Board and served first and third Sundays. I thought we looked good in our gray suites. I was always willing to assist whenever asked by other organizations."

As Aunt Gracie continued to tell her life story, she shared with us and her physicians why God blessed her with such a long, fulfilling, and rewarding life while also discussing the things she loved. She started the conversation by sharing how she "loved being home" and sharing a marriage with her soulmate Walter Joseph Benjamin. After a whirlwind courtship, on November 4, 1961, Aunt Gracie and Uncle Ben were united in marriage.



Family was very important explained Aunt Gracie. She spoke of loving to cook for her family and friends. Not only did she prepare soul food delicacies, but she was also a pseudo-pastry chef. Little did we know that Aunt Gracie included a special ingredient in everything she prepared. From hosting family dinners to cooking everyday meals, Aunt Gracie sprinkled a little bit of love in every recipe. Three meals a day was what she prepared for anyone who sat at her table. A table always adorned with fresh flowers as an expression of the joy and beauty of her blessed life. Let's not forget Aunt Gracie had style and dressed, from her prim and proper ways to her coordinated attire.

"Have Bag will Travel" could have been her motto. Whether traveling abroad or domestically, she was ready to go to have a good time. Aunt Gracie recalled road trips with family and friends by car and R.V. A good cruise or airplane ride she enjoyed them all. Aunt Gracie was often, the life of the trip with her quick wit and keen sense of humor.

No trip or event was complete if there wasn't a good bid whist card game and some dancing. She was a member of the Darnell Center Bid Whist Club. "Here kitty, kitty" she would call as she looked around after placing the last card down of a winning bid. Has she ever taken you to "Boston?" For those unfamiliar with the term, it means the team wins 13 of 13 possible books. She loved the gathering of friends at the table. Let the music play on would be her next stop if she lost at bid whist. A good swing dance, twist, jerk, or electric slide, taught to her by her nieces Vashti and Brenda, would bring about a smile as she owned the dance floor.

Aunt Gracie states that her long life could be attributed to being KIND and GIVING to others. Staying calm with an inner strength and resilience that kept her is a quality we all should model. She has shown us three philosophies of life:

- First, always give thanks to our Lord and Savior.
- Second, "And Then Some": Give whatever you are doing your all... "And Then Some."
- Third, Ten Powerful words: "If it is to be, it is up to me."

With these philosophies, her nieces, nephews, and other relatives and friends will always cherish her memories.

Nieces: Esther Robinson, Barbara Lovett, Elder Willa Elmer, Paulette Harvell, Wanda Hiley, and Janet Harvell

Nephews: Joseph Thomas, John Harvell, Eddie Holmes (Fannie), and Clifford Thomas, Jr. (Mariam)

Surrogate Children

Anthony Benjamin Bailey, Wanza Bailey Bacon, and Andrea Patrice Bailey

Play Daughter

Charlene Jones

Goddaughter

Davina M. Dukes

Great nieces, Great Nephews, Great-Great Nieces, and Great-Great Nephews, and my wonderful community of cousins, other family members, and friends that will celebrate my life.





My Lovely Aunt Grace

*My Aunt Grace you are so special to me,
For my entire life you have treated me wonderfully.*

*I've always admired you beyond words,
So the urgency to write this rap just occurred.
You are so classy, sassy – such a lady of style,
Just sitting and writing this, makes me smile.*

*Then the question becomes – am I bringing a smile to your face,
Well my lovely aunt, I'm sure yes is the case.*

*Now by the way, if you feel like you wanna dance,
With my beats and rhymes – here's your big chance.*

Now back in the day, you and Uncle Ben would drive down from Chicago,

And Felicia and I would be so excited – like kids playing in the snow.

And Aunt Grace, if I ever asked you how to stay so calm, happy and free,

You would say – well the Lord has been so good to me.

And on this point, I most certainly agree,

As that goodness is a shared reality.

Now you know you are amazing at 90+ years young,

And my love for you will be forever strong.

You might be thinking – Cliff this is just too much,

But you so deserve this, because of your loving touch.

Now creating this for you has been for me a treat,

But what I am looking forward to is hugging you and kissing you on each cheek.

I think I could go on like this for a long time,

And because of how wonderful you are, that would be just fine.

I'm sure my point has been well received by you,

But the best part is that everything I've said is true.

So now that I've put to music how wonderful you are,

I just want to say that you are my family Superstar.

Your long life has taught me great lessons,

Live, live, live with love and kindness and receive God's good blessings.

Well Aunt Grace this was a total pleasure,

And everything you mean to me – I will forever treasure.

I love you and bye for now – um huh that's right.

Sincerely, Clifford U. Thomas, Jr.



Order of Service

The Musical Prelude

The Processional

"When We All Get To Heaven"

The Solo

"On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand"

Ms. L'Tanya Moore-Copeland

The Prayer

The Hymn of Comfort

"What a Friend We Have In Jesus"

The Scriptures:

The Old Testament
The New Testament

Rev. Paul Little II, Bibb, *Mount Zion Baptist Church, Macon, GA*
Rev. Dr. Priscilla Adams, *Saint Philip AME Church, Atlanta, GA*

The Violin Medley of Songs

Mr. Nathaniel Lynn, *Nephew*

The Expressions of Love (3 minutes)

Mattie Booker Usher Board – Dr. Danette Adams
Thomas Family – Elder Willa Dean Elmer, Niece
Benjamin Family – Dr. Wanza Bacon, Niece
Hazelwood Neighborhood Club – Mr. Walter Woods

The Resolutions

Interdenominational Church Ushers of GA – Mr. Harold Hester
Saint Philip Seniors & Retirees – Mr. Calvin Kemp and Mrs. Annette Curry

The Video Presentation

Acknowledgement

Mr. John Leak, *Funeral Director*

The Musical Selection

"We Will Understand It Better"

Ms. L'Tanya Moore-Copeland

The Eulogy

Rev. Dr. Watley

The Recessional

"I'm Going Up Yonder"

ENTOMBMENT

Lincoln Cemetery and Mausoleum
2275 Joseph E. Boone Boulevard, Northwest
Atlanta, Georgia 30314

Together Forever

Gracie Ruth Thomas Benjamin
October 20, 1928 to January 6, 2023

Walter Joseph Benjamin
September 29, 1921 to October 25, 2005

United in Holy Matrimony
November 4, 1961
44 Years

