

Order of Celebration Service

- Processional..... Sis. Erica Cooper
Family/Clergy
- Prayer..... Ms. Janice Jones
- Scriptures..... Rev. Jessie Cannon
Union Missionary Baptist Church
- Song..... Sis. Erica Cooper
- Family and Friends..... 2 people, 2 minutes
- Words of Expression..... The University of Arkansas Pine Bluff
Mr. Curtis Craft
Langston High School Class of 1962
Mr. Garland Puckett/Ms. Lavenia Hicks
Mrs. Mary Moore - The Webb Center
- Song..... Sis. Erica Cooper
- Eulogy..... Rev. Barbara Hunter Cooper
Union Missionary Baptist Church
- Recessional..... Family and Clergy

Repast

St. Mark Baptist Church
542 Crescent Street • Hot Springs

“I Am Still With You, My Daughters”

My precious girls, don't bow your heads,
Don't let your hearts despair,
For though you cannot see me now,
I am forever there.
In every laugh you share together,
In every tear you cry,
In quiet moments filled with love—
That's where I truly lie.
Remember how I held you close,
And kissed away your fears—
That love has not been laid to rest,
It lives beyond the years.
Carry me in all you do,
In kindness, strength, and grace,
For every time you love the world,
You show a part of my face.
And when you feel you've lost your way,
Or long to hear my voice,
Look deep within your heart, my girls—
You'll find me there... rejoice.
So do not think I've gone away,
Or left you here alone,
I walk beside you every day—
My love will guide you home.

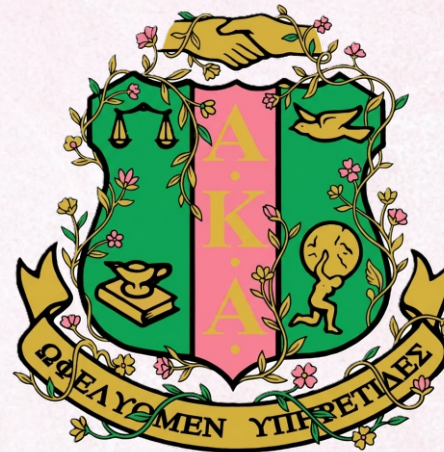
Honorary Bearers

Frank Cooper, III • Keith Scott
Edward Whipple, IV • Kaleb Whipple

Our Gratitude

The family of Willye Cooper Martin would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for the many acts of kindness, love, and support shown to us during this time of loss. Your prayers, comforting words, visits, phone calls, flowers, cards, and every thoughtful gesture have meant more to us than we can fully express.

May God bless each of you for the compassion you have shown. We will forever cherish your kindness.



*In pink we stand, in green we grow,
A sisterhood the world will know.
With grace, with strength, with hearts so true,
We lift as high as we climb through.
Service, sisterhood, and light—
We shine with purpose, bold and bright.
A bond that time cannot undo...
Forever an AKA—through and through.*



Programs provided by

Carrigan Memorial Funeral Services, Inc.

Chester Carrigan, Founder Constance Hamilton Carrigan, Owner
Ebony Carrigan-Cain, Director • Jonathan Carrigan, Director
336 East Grand Ave.
Hot Springs, AR 71901
(501) 623-7664 • Fax (501) 623-7811

“Funeral Services Beyond the Ordinary and More Than Just the Acceptable”



A Celebration of Life for

Willye COOPER MARTIN

Service

Saturday, April 11, 2026 • 11:00 AM

Nazarene Baptist Church
220 Silver Street
Hot Springs, Arkansas

Rev. Jessie Cannon - Officiating
Union Missionary Baptist Church



THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF *Willye Cooper Martin*

There were two significant markers in 1944 that would shape the course of history and impact countless lives: the rise of the modern civil rights movement and the birth of Willye Cooper Martin. Born September 7, 1944, in East Carroll Parish, Louisiana, Willye, affectionately known as “BaeBae”, was the third child of Frank and Pearl Cooper. She was not only a beloved daughter but also a devoted sibling, mother, grandmother, friend, colleague, teacher, and community activist. At her core, she was a strong Black woman who defied social norms, overcame barriers, and shattered glass ceilings. As a trailblazer, she changed the trajectory of life for her generation and those to follow, leaving a legacy marked by both grit and grace.

Willye graduated third in her class in 1962 from the Historic Langston High School, becoming the first in her family to attend college. She enrolled at Arkansas AM&N College (now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff), where she continued to excel academically and later pursued advanced studies in education. Although she earned a degree in business, Willye possessed a remarkable gift for mathematics. In 1966, the same year she graduated, she pledged the Alpha Rho Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated, forming lifelong bonds of sisterhood and friendship.

Following graduation, Willye was recruited by IBM, once again breaking barriers and blazing trails. She has often been described as a “Hidden Figure” within the company. During the 1960s, an era marked by racial division and inequality, Willye stood among the few Black women in her field. Despite the isolation and exclusion that often accompanied integration efforts, her brilliance and determination made her an indispensable part of several advanced projects during her tenure.

In November 1967, Willye married Harold Martin. Their union was blessed with two daughters: Angelique, born in July 1968 in Chicago, Illinois, and Aprille, born in September 1972 in Michigan. As the family relocated to various cities, Willye remained steadfast in her commitment to raising her daughters with resilience, courage, and a sense of limitless possibility. Often, they found themselves integrating neighborhoods for the first time. Even in the face of adversity, Willye carried herself with dignity, grace, and unwavering strength.

When her daughters were older, Willye returned to the workforce, embarking on a new and impactful chapter as an educator. For over three decades, she dedicated her life to shaping young minds, using her love for mathematics to inspire generations of students. Honoring the legacy of her own beloved teacher, Mrs. Jewel Frazier, Willye taught in predominantly white, male-dominated environments, where her presence alone was groundbreaking. More than a teacher, she was a mentor, a confidante, and a safe haven. Her students remember her not only for her academic excellence but for her compassion, consistency,



and willingness to go above and beyond. Though small in stature, she commanded every room with respect and taught lessons that extended far beyond the classroom, lessons of resilience, integrity, and quiet strength.

Retirement ushered in a vibrant new chapter of life. Willye embraced her love for travel and adventure, exploring destinations such as Europe, Dubai, and Egypt, while also enjoying the rich culture and cuisine of places like New Orleans. She cherished time spent socializing with family and friends, creating memories that would last a lifetime. Yet, even in retirement, her commitment to service never waned. She volunteered at the Emma Eleese Webb Community Center, worked at the front desk, and remained deeply involved with the Langston Reunion Committee and the UAPB Alumni Association the Reunion Committee. Affectionately known as the “Mother Hen” of her high school class, Willye ensured that every detail was handled with care and excellence.

Her love and dedication shone most brightly in her role as a grandmother and great-grandmother. She poured into the lives of her grandchildren, encouraging them to pursue their dreams boldly, love deeply, and care for others wholeheartedly.

Willye will be remembered for her love of life and her love for people. She once wrote, “I hope my friends remember me as the fun-loving person I am.” She lived through some of the darkest days of segregation and witnessed the triumphs of the civil rights movement from “colored only” water fountains to the inauguration of the nation’s first Black president. Yet, her life’s work extended beyond witnessing change; she actively contributed to it. She championed transformation: within herself, her family, her students, her community, and the world around her.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Frank and Pearl Cooper; her sisters, Inez Milsap, Tostie “Dolly” Cooper, Nanette Scott, Charlene Cooper, and Barbara Cooper; her brother, Frank “Bubba” Cooper Jr.; her childhood friend, Corretta Beavers; and her special friend, Raymond Johnson.

Willye’s legacy of love, laughter, compassion, and unwavering dedication will forever live on through her daughters, Angelique “Angel” Martin-Calhoun, Aprille Martin, and Regina Milsap; her son/grandson, Edward “T” Whipple IV; her grandchildren, Kendall Calhoun; her great-grandchildren, Kaleb Whipple, Kaidan Moore, Alanai Harris, and Halaya Whipple; along with a host of nieces, nephews, lifelong friends, and cherished companions, including Gwen Bronson of Flint, Michigan, Janice Jones of Hamilton, Ohio, and Rosie Perry of Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Her life was a testament to perseverance, faith, and love, a legacy that will continue to inspire for generations to come.