



HONORING THE LIFE OF

*Willielee Parrish*

Sunrise: August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1921 - Sunset: May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020

**Tuesday, May 12, 2020**

Detroit Memorial Park East  
4280 E. Thirteen Mile Road · Warren, MI 48092  
Homegoing (Graveside) Service: 2:00 PM  
**Rev. Larry L. Simmons Sr., Officiating**  
**Baber AME Church**

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*In loving memory of  
Willielee Parrish*

*I love you more today  
than yesterday,  
But not as much  
as tomorrow.*

*I love you more today  
than yesterday  
But, Momma,  
not as much as tomorrow.*



# ORDER OF SERVICE

Reverend Larry L. Simmons, Sr., Officiating

## Processional

Scripture: *Psalm 91*

## Prayer

Song: “*Going up Yonder*” by Tramaine Hawkins

Acknowledgement of Cards, Condolences and Obituary

## Eulogy

## Recessional



The LORD is my *Shepherd;*  
I shall not want.

He maketh me  
lie down in green pastures:

He leadeth me beside the still waters,  
He restoreth my

*soul:*

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness  
for His name's sake. Yea though I walk through the  
valley of the shadow of death.

*I will fear no evil:  
for Thou art with me;*

Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies  
Thou anointest my head with oil; My cup runneth over  
Surely goodness & mercy shall follow me  
all the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house

of the LORD

*forever.*

- Psalm 23

# Obituary

*Willielee Harris was born in Toledo, Ohio on August 16, 1921, to William and Viola Harris.*

*William was born in Louisiana, Chicot, Arkansas in 1899. He worked as a laborer but was an adventurer at heart. Shortly after relocating to Ohio, he met a kindred spirit named Viola. Viola Nunn was born on January 26, 1904, in Atlanta, Georgia to James and Sarah Davenport Nunn.*

*In 1924, when Willielee, affectionately nicknamed "Snookie", was three years old, foster parents John and Maude Brown of Lorado, West Virginia, brought home their precious little girl. The Browns already had one son, Dempsey Husband, and he and Willielee immediately formed a lifelong bond and even devised their own language to communicate. Later the Browns gave birth to a son, Johnny, and a baby girl named Ruby. Willielee was excited to have a baby brother and sister of her own.*

*Drawn by the possibility of a better life, Willielee reconnected with her birth mother, Viola, and moved to Detroit. Even as a teen, Willielee was fiercely independent yet, determined to contribute to her family's wellbeing, so she put her education on hold and began working full time. Willielee always valued learning and education, a value she instilled in her family, and in 1975 at the age of 54, she obtained her high school certificate from the Michigan State Board of Education in Lansing. She was wise beyond her years and far beyond her formal education.*

*Willielee worked hard all of her life and devoted many years to domestic work. She formed lasting relationships with her employers and was highly respected for the exceptional work she performed. As the song goes, she scrubbed the floors "down on bended knees." Over her many years, Willielee had a variety of jobs. In addition to working in a domestic capacity, she worked in a restaurant and a frozen food factory just to name a few. Her favorite job was caretaker to her husband and children, and later, even her great-grandchildren.*

*On August 30, 1939, Willielee Harris married Harold "Vag" Wendell Parrish. They continued to live in Detroit where Vag worked at many jobs. He always said that he was a Jack of all trades and master of none. This later proved to be untrue as Vag was a highly skilled factory worker until he retired in 1972. He was also an expert electronic repairman but that's another story for another time. Willielee and Harold honored their wedding vows, "till death do us part," and were married until he preceded her in death in 1980.*

*Willielee and Harold were blessed with two beautiful bouncing baby girls, Janice (Larry Wells) and Susan (Wyley Burroughs). Susan preceded her mother in death in 2002. Janice remained a devoted and caring daughter until her mother's passing.*

*"Billie" as she is known by her family and close friends, is a self-taught jazz pianist and has a great love of music, art, and culture. She has imparted that love into her children, grandchildren, and even her great-grandchildren. Billie was also an excellent dancer. Some of her other hobbies included sewing, drawing, puzzles, storytelling, and "the numbers." She enjoyed good food, fashion, interior designs, and traveling the world, especially Las Vegas where she celebrated her 98th birthday. Billie was an immaculate dresser and was often complimented on her choice of hats, extravagant jewelry, and unique style.*

*Bille was an active Eastern Star and became a Worthy Matron at St. John's Lodge #5 in Detroit. This is one of the highest offices that an Eastern Star can achieve. She was an active member of the Bowin Place Community where she was well respected for 40 years. Billie believed in the power of herbs and natural remedies for healing, and diligently studied western and eastern medicines, and astrology before taking any medication or undergoing a procedure. Her medical doctor Grandson (Lance) always says she was the family's first doctor.*

*Willielee was a woman of great faith and a devout Christian. She generously tithed and gave offerings to her local church faithfully. She easily quoted scriptures from the bible, book, chapter, and verse, by memory. She loved Baber AME Church and her Nephew Reverend Larry L. Simmons Sr.*

Most notably, Billie was a strong supporter of her family. Her constant encouragement and support of their goals and aspirations is why she could proudly say her grandchildren are college graduates and successful professionals. She enjoyed participating in weekly family Zoom meetings and would always say, "I love you all," as often as she could until she was called home to rest on the evening of May 2, 2020.

She had a passionate love of life and family, and she instilled this love into the life of each person she touched; because for Billie, "life was a journey, not just a destination." Left to cherish her sweet memory are her daughter Janice (Larry) Wells and nineteen grand and great-grandchildren including Mary Wells-Rucker, her son Reverend William Christopher (JaJuan) Rucker; James Abram (Nichole) Wells and his daughters Maisha, Trier, and Tatianna; Kym Anita (Barry) Walker their daughter Karrington and son Koleman; Larry "Qwame" Wells his daughter LaNyce and son Mario; Dr. Lance (Giannina) Wells and their sons, Khalil, Lance, Ethan, and Luke; and, Susan's son, Wyley L. Burroughs Jr.

Also left to honor her memory are two special nieces Carolyn Parrish Carter and Patricia Ann Brown (Ted) Boggues and (their families), and two special nephews the Rev. Larry (Betty) Simmons Sr. and Lionel "Lenny" Tyrone (Juanita) Simmons II (and their families). Additionally, she left a host of great-nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends including her good friend Annette Chester. She was the last living mother of a close-knit group of friends affectionately known as "The Framily."

Her Granddaughter Mary was her constant companion and caregiver until she passed, wrapped warmly in love.

## Sentiments of Endearment

Mama, I did my very best. You always called me "My Angel," and told me how very proud you were of me. Well, I could not have been more proud of you.

Your total recall, your sense of humor, your style, your 37 caps and hats. Sometimes your storytelling, your fierce love of your family. You are definitely a phenomenal woman!

As the song says,  
"You're the Queen of my heart. Your love is like tears from the stars. Mama, I just want you to know, lovin' you is like food to my soul.  
Never gonna go a day without you. Fills me up just thinkin' about you.  
I'll never go a day without my mama!"

Mama, I will love you forever!

Love your daughter,

Janice



You have been my mother for 55 of your 98 years. God saw you getting tired when a cure was not to be. So, He wrapped His arms around you and whispered, "Come to me." You didn't deserve what you went through; so, He gave you rest. God's garden must be beautiful, because He only takes the best. And when I saw you sleeping so peaceful and free from pain, I could not wish you back to suffer that again.

Love your son-in-love,  
Larry





# Sentiments of Endearment



You were my oldest and dearest friend.

You taught me about the love of Jesus and how to pray and sing. I still remember you teaching me to sing, "Yes, Jesus loves me," when I was only 3 or 4 years old, and I taught it to Jim. You also helped me develop my decorating and fashion sense. It is where I get my love of makeup, animal print outfits, high heels, and, do not forget, the matching sunglasses.

Grandma, you taught me how to design on a dime, about tapestries, wallpaper, crystal, and porcelain dolls long before it became fashionable on HGTV. Then when my son came along you instilled values in him that you had instilled in me. You taught us life lessons and skills that we will never forget. You two became best pals as were we. You were always there for us when we needed you most. Great was your loving-kindness towards me.

Your example of caring, giving, sharing, faithfulness, thoughtfulness, and dedication to hard work rubbed off on me and all of your grandchildren and great-grandchildren who came after me. Most of all you showed us that you loved us and it could be felt by all.

You gave us what you had, sometimes you even gave your all. I appreciate it so much, no matter how big or small. Grandma your roots grow deep, wide, and strong. You are our family's matriarch, royal duchess (like Megan Markle), and the apple of our eyes.

You lived with grace, dignity and pride, which you continued to demonstrate until the day you died. Now in heaven, you abide near the Almighty's side, in that heavenly mansion that you have earned up in the sky.

I've cried every day and night since you've been gone. My eyes are filled with tears of joy and sorrow. I know I won't see you today, but I have precious memories and will see you in heaven tomorrow.

So I won't say goodbye I'll just say so long. Until that one sweet day that I am also called home.

Rest in paradise Grandma, I'll see you soon.

*Love your first and eldest Granddaughter,  
Mary Eileen (Mary Belle)*



Thank you, Grandma,

Your words of wisdom, the comfort of your voice, and the guidance from our conversations have always been a beacon of light in my path of life. God willing, I can provide the same and pass forth all the blessings and teachings I learned from you.

I love you and will miss you dearly.

*RIH,  
Larry "Quame" Wells*

# Sentiments of Endearment

## Great, Grand, Mother:

We've written to each other for as long as I can remember. Today, I know I won't get a letter back and that's okay, because love is what matters, and I have that. Your love has always been without condition. I am still amazed at how full of love you are (*true love don't end*). Though we'll never physically write another song, or make up a skit together (who am I kidding, we made productions) in this lifetime, we'll also never not have done those things.

I still sleep with Teddy by my side because he reminds me of your love. I will lay him to rest now, too. Not because I don't still need you both, because I do. But now I have you in a new way.

The greatest gift I've ever gotten the way you made me feel wanted. I always knew that I could call you and no matter what else was going on, you'd feel better hearing my voice. I loved (*trying*) to surprise you in person, too. It never worked, you always knew. I did my best to make you feel wanted, too. I hope did okay. **Ubuntu.**

Our relationship was ours, so I'm keeping this mostly between us. I wrote this after our last conversation. I call it, *Love is*.

*I love you now more than ever,  
Your baby, Chris*

*"Everything we seek,  
Love is.*

*Wrapped in soil, seeds begin to grow;  
To touch the sky, the shell must go.  
Whether a bird or a tall oak tree,  
Wherever beauty rises,  
Love is."*



I remember the very first day I met you. I was full of anxiety, not because of you, but because I was told by your grandson that "if you didn't like me, neither did he." You got in the car and the first thing you said was, "I see some things don't change" as you referred to his not so tidy car. Something happened and instantly we clicked. Ever since that day you've loved me and embraced me; not just as your grandson's partner, but as your grandson. It was an honor to care for you when you came to Vegas one last time and I can proudly say that you were my great-grandma. Rest now, you lived a full and rich life.

*Love, JaJuan*

To say you were our matriarch would not be enough. To us, you were strong, independent, and charismatic. Understanding of us as people not just kids and your position never came from judgment. You loved us as we were.

You were my great-grandmother. I was lucky to have you in my life well into my 30's. A treasure to speak on our memories and know you were still creating more. You were showing me through action that you can live and age in your own space at your own accord, something I looked up to very much. You waited for no help from others and we gladly went grocery store shopping in the city with you to get your food & lottery tickets. You were truthfully and unabashedly yourself. For me, this was a priceless lesson that never needed words or captions.

My love for you is eternal and knows no bounds. I know you are looking down at your daughter, Janice, and all that came from that creation 'cause there can be no better child, for through her came my father and me. An endless legacy all your own. I love you, my dear.

*Love Mai, your eldest great-grandchild.  
Asé ancestor. Rest knowing your journey here is complete.*

Mostly, I just wanted to say thank you, Grandma Billie. Thank you for sharing your stories with me. Learning about you and our family history meant so much to me. Thank you for sharing your style with me, one of the things that stick out foremost in my mind about you is how jazzy you always were. And of course your stunning hats. Thank you for showing me how to be an outspoken woman and how to stand up for myself. I appreciate all the love you always gave me and I will miss you terribly. Lastly, thank you for sharing your birthday with me, it always made me feel special to know I shared August 16 with such a phenomenal woman. - *Love, Trier*



# Sentiments of Endearment

When I was little, my grandmother taught me how to make a poodle out of yarn and a wire hanger, so as an homage to nostalgia I decided to recreate it. I added the buttons because they had a vintage look, and the ribbon and shades for a “retro” look. I was worried I couldn’t recreate this craft like when I first made it; I thought of how I could recreate that moment in my childhood, but I couldn’t.

Those memories cannot be recreated, which is why we reminisce. If we were able to recreate that moment, it would not be as special.

Such is the sad truth of nostalgia.

*Lovingly,  
Karrington*

My grandmother meant the world to me. She made a difference in the lives of a lot of people, especially mine. She was a Fashionista that was very hardworking and took care of herself independently for 98 years.

She overcame many difficulties growing up, yet, she remained loyal to her family. She made me feel like I could do anything and always affirmed everything I set out to do. She was a brave woman and I’m so grateful that she passed that strength on to me.

I have many great memories of her talking on the phone to me for hours. It brought me joy and tears because that was the only way I could be close to her as she got older and my life got busier.

I called her house the week before she passed just see if she would pick up the phone one more time so she could talk to me some more but she didn’t. I guess I’ll just have to listen to her loving wisdom long distance by our spiritual connection.

Thank you, Lord, for allowing my Grandmother to make a difference in my life and enduring this world for over 98 years. You knew that I needed her.

Rest in the Joy of the Lord ,Grandma.

*I love you,  
Kym Anita*



# A LETTER FROM HEAVEN

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

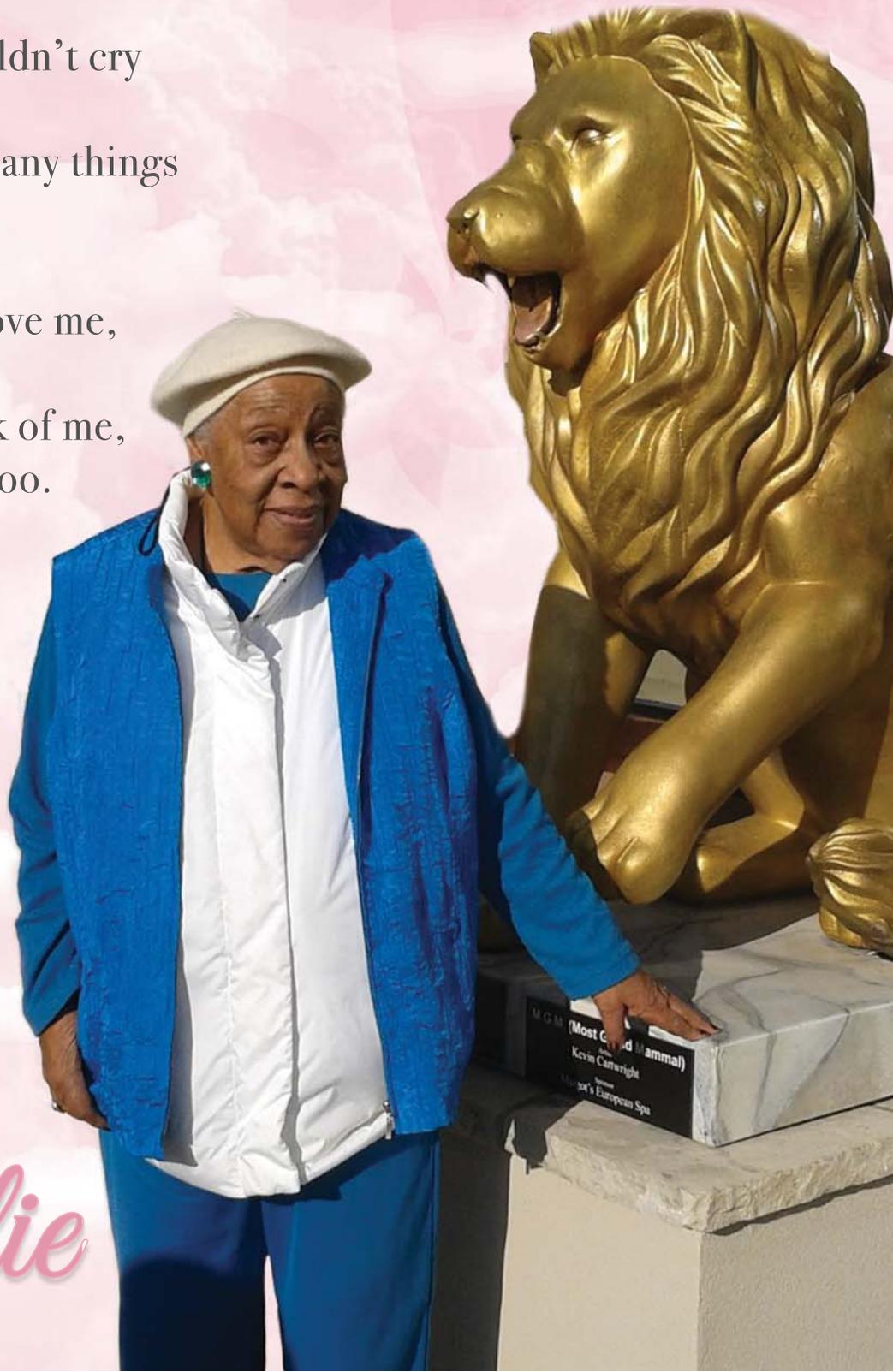
I wish so much you wouldn't cry  
The way you did today,  
While thinking of the many things  
We didn't get to say.

I know how much you love me,  
As much as I love you.  
And each time 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 there in  
your heart.

*Forever Yours,*

*Billie*



### **Honorary Pallbearers**

Wyley L. Burroughs Jr. | Barry M. Walker  
Lionel Tyrone "Lenny" Simmons II | James Abraham Wells  
Larry "Qwame" Wells | Lance A. Wells

### **Honorary Flower Bearers**

Karrington Walker | Giannina Wells  
LaNyce Wells | Maisha Cherry Wells  
Nichole Wells | Trier Wells

## *Final Arrangements Entrusted To*

James H. Cole Home for Funerals, Inc.  
Northwest Chapel  
16100 Schaefer Hwy.  
Detroit, MI 48235  
(313) 835-3997

## *Interment*

Detroit Memorial Park East  
4280 E. Thirteen Mile Road  
Warren, MI 48092  
(586) 751-1313

## *Acknowledgment of Appreciation*

*The family of the late Willielee Parrish wishes to acknowledge, with deep appreciation, the many comforting messages, floral tributes, and many other expressions of kindness and concern at this time in thought and deed. May God continue to bless and keep each of you.*