



Ethel Johnson

July 3, 1937 - March 16, 2026

On March 16th at 11:35 am, a tornado watch threatened the city bringing dark clouds over Charlotte. The gentle and soulful voice of Al Green drowned out the sounds of heavy rain. Ethel held on to her daughter's hand and took one final breath. Her story began more than 88 years earlier in Cheraw, SC. Ethel was born July 3, 1937, the seventh child of Georgianna and Fred Campbell. She grew up on a farm but realized early on that farm life wasn't for her. She would stare at the sun and daydream about the big city. Eventually her eyes turned red. Usually that was enough to get her out of the cotton fields for the day. As she grew into a teenager, Ethel's big city dreams grew with her. Trips to visit family in Baltimore and Philadelphia exposed her to city life. She spent as much time as she could at the local movie theater watching films and wondering what it would be like for her if she lived in these places. She would find out in 1955. Still a high school student, Ethel secretly married Henry "Gold" Johnson, packed her clothes and moved to Brooklyn, NY. She fell in love with the hustle and bustle of the city. For Ethel, becoming a New Yorker meant embracing style and sophistication. She adopted a new pronunciation of her name, which had been Eee-Thell. Not only did she build a life for herself, but she also encouraged her siblings to make the move as well. At one point, seven of her brothers and sisters also lived in NYC. They created their own traditions and family celebrations that would span decades. "Love and Happiness" is not just a song by Ethel's favorite singer. She lived her life with love and happiness at the forefront. Often the loudest voice in the room,

her distinct laugh and vibrance could be felt by all she encountered. She loved to celebrate life, to dance, and spend time with her family. But she always imagined having a family of her own. At 32, she welcomed her son Rod. He was her whole world. While she wanted more children, she thought that it was unlikely as she got into her forties. But surprisingly, weeks shy of her 42nd birthday, her daughter Tawanda arrived. She also helped raise her great-nephew Jason. As a mother, Ethel challenged her children to do their best and made sure they knew how much they were loved. Going to bed without saying, "I love you," was not an option. Having missed a great deal of school to work the fields as a child, Ethel made education a priority for her children. She pushed them to take advantage of all the doors, school would open. Doors, that had been closed to her. Ethel made it to the big city, but she hadn't finished high school, which limited her career prospects. She cleaned the homes of wealthy white families, before joining the housekeeping staff at Kingsboro Psychiatric Center. She worked there with her sisters Ada and Bessie. Ethel spent nearly 20 years at Kingsboro and put in her retirement paperwork the week her daughter Tawanda graduated from New York University. She was proud and relieved that her daughter wouldn't have to do the same backbreaking work. Strength, determination, and resilience were traits that Ethel displayed early on. But life would test her in many ways. In 1999, she lost her son Rod. His death broke her heart and nearly broke her, but she found the will to carry on. In 2007 she had a heart attack and underwent quadruple bypass surgery. "I have to do this on my own," she said as she walked unassisted from the car to her apartment after the procedure. In 2010, she suffered a stroke, which would impact her communication skills. She wasn't the loudest in the room anymore, but the laugh and the vibrance continued. In 2015, she had another stroke, resulting in partial paralysis and in 2016 she went into cardiac arrest. With every major setback or health issue, she fought her way back. She willed her way to survive. She overcame and moved forward. She continued to love and find happiness. As much as she wanted to become a mother, she wanted to be a grandmother even more. She

waited 87 years for that title. She pushed her body to its limits to ensure that she had as many moments with her grandson as possible. Ethel is a fighter, a rebel, a fashionista, a mother, a grandmother, a sister, an aunt, a cousin, and a friend. She forged her own path and always did things her way. Her fight is over, but the love and happiness she brought to so many lives on. Ethel leaves behind to celebrate her memory her daughter Tawanda Chandler Robinson, son-in law Latorrin Robinson, grandson Chandler Robinson, and a host of nieces and nephews. She joins her son Rod, great-nephew Jason, her parents Fred and Georgianna, and sisters and brothers: Louis, Clinton, Willie Mac, Ada, Fred, Theo, Geraldine, Bessie, Corrine, Johnny, Albert, and Eddie.

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 28. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

A.E. Grier & Sons Funeral and Cremation, LLC.
2310 Statesville Avenue
Charlotte, NC 28206
(704) 377-4243
info@aegriersonsfcc.com
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Celebration of Life Service

MAR 28. 12:00 PM (ET)

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