



Lillian Lula Burke

September 20, 2013

Lillian Lula Walker Baldwin Burke departed this life the morning of Friday, September 20, 2013 at Providence Hospital in Washington, DC.

She was born on December 13, 1944 in Newark, NJ the third child of the late Lillian Lula Sherrill Walker and Leslie Bernard Walker Sr.

Lillian was raised in Newark, NJ with her late older sister Jeanette LaVern Walker James and older brother Leslie Bernard Walker Jr. She attended elementary, middle and secondary school in Newark, NJ and still has friends from that time in her life. Her sixth grade teacher, Mr. Joseph Greene was her favorite teacher, and a man who remained a lifetime friend; sent his condolences on her passing. Carol Spearman was her Kindergarten buddy and remained one of her dear friends to her final day.

After participating in multiple Delta Sigma Theta events and Jabberwocks as a teenager, Lillian pledged Delta Zeta Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta in 1965 while attending Newark State College (now Kean University). She received her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, and in 1966 she obtained her teacher's license and joined the Newark Teachers Union.

In 1967, she married her first husband James Baldwin and from this union she had a daughter Leslie Dara Baldwin. Lillian lived in Spain for a few years while James served in the US Air Force. She was a new mother in a foreign country with no family around but she did a fabulous job. Upon her return to the US, she reentered her career as an elementary teacher in the Newark Board of

Education (NBE) School system in Newark, NJ. In total, Lillian would spend 36 years in that system, holding various positions. In 1983, she received her Masters Degree in English as Second Language (ESL) Instruction from Kean University. Her education and passion to educate gave her multiple opportunities within the education system. She created numerous programs, planned events and dedicated herself to increase the educational experiences of her students and their families, both in and out of the classroom.

Lillian served as elementary and ESL teacher, and went to NBE Central offices to assist with the implementation of computer education throughout the district. She was responsible for the training of teachers and the implementation of the program in all of the elementary schools in Newark.

Lillian believed, back in 1985, that computer education was essential for every child in Newark schools because "...in 10-15 years every job will require computer skills and our children deserve this instruction." In 1991, she left central offices to become the Vice Principal at Bragaw Avenue School and joined City Association of Supervisors and Administrators (CASA) AFSA/AFL-CIO, Local 20 of Newark, NJ. In 1994, she became the Principal of Clinton Avenue School. The school was a magnate program for the Bank Street College at Columbia University, NY. Lillian attended Bank Street College educational program every year that she was an administrator.

In the midst of her career achievements and after a separation, she became a single mom. On October 22, 1989, she went on a blind date and met Walter Burke. The rest, they say, is history. Walter and Lillian dated for a few years, and on October 22, 1994 they were united in matrimony at their then church home of Franklin St. Johns. Her brother Leslie walked her down the aisle. Lillian and Walter's union created a family of two girls and two boys. Dara gained three siblings Darius, Lauren and Keith Burke.

Lillian enjoyed married life, working as a principal, traveling, participating in her community through her many organizations and being a mom. In 2002, she made the decision after just one visit to the pension office to see if she could retire and retired on the spot. In September 2002, she retired from the

Newark Public School System and had “one of the best retirement parties the city has ever seen.”

In 2004, Lillian and Walter moved to Denver, NC to start another chapter of their life. Lillian enjoyed her retirement, and she first chose a church home, and with her husband joined Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Charlotte, NC. She embraced her life in NC with the same enthusiasm, joy and love she did everywhere she lived.

Lillian had a multitude of friends whom she loved but “her girls” were Barbara Ervin, Annie Hartsfield, Blanche Jones, Carol Spearman and Jean Patterson. Another friend also had the title of cousin Carroll Fitzhugh. They are all alive and will now have an angel watching over them.

Lillian was a member of multiple organizations and church ministries. She loved being a part of the garden clubs, literary clubs, quilting ministry, applique clubs, library club, aquatic groups, girlfriend club and many more. Lillian was a certified aqua aerobics instructor for the past two years. She served on many boards for a number of civic organizations and foundations. She was a mentor and friend to so many young people she taught or those whom she just met, knew and loved. She was an avid social justice advocate, having marched in Selma, registering people to vote in numerous states, fighting for voter rights as well as many other civil and human rights through grassroots and community work. Her membership in Delta Sigma Theta, along with her faith, was a cornerstone in her life.

She was a woman of faith all of her life even when she was a “Child of the 60’s”. In her lifetime she was a member of the AME, United Methodist and Baptist churches. Her final church home was Friendship Missionary Baptist Church in Charlotte, NC.

Lillian leaves to mourn her husband Walter Burke, daughter Leslie Dara Baldwin, three-step children Darius, Lauren and Keith Burke, a daughter-in-law Nicole Burke, brother Leslie Walker, sister-in-law Quan Walker, brother-in-law Russell Burke Sr., sister-in-law Sheila Burke; nieces and nephews

Jeanelle Crawford, Inga Shelton, Tjarren James, Kwesi Walter, Breonna Burke, Rushelle Burke and Russell Burke Jr. Grand-nieces and nephews Darrell Moore, Sierra Harbur, Ethan Harbur, Phillip James, Marcell James & Ebony Shelton. God-children Courteney Ervin and David Ervin Jr.; as well as a vast number of family members and friends who loved her dearly.