

Life Tribute

Mary Helen Nelson

The date was November 30, 1930, but it wasn't simply an ordinary day. It was a day of sheer jubilation because the world would never be the same. For it was the day that Washington and LaVerna Williams were bestowed with the honor and blessing of welcoming their first born, the precious Mary Helen, into this world. The joy that Mary Helen evoked was contagious: the heartbeat of life could be felt by this gem of a jewel by every life she touched. Living by the mantra that says, "You give but little when you give of your passions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give" (The Prophet), and hiding 1 Corinthians 13 (the Love Chapter) in her heart, the world is a better place because Mary Helen Nelson lived. There are many words that could describe her: loving wife to Roy C. Nelson, doting matriarch to her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren, humble servant, and exemplary educator suit her best.

Mary Helen's journey began in Paris, Texas. Her love for God was exemplified through her membership and service at Johnson Chapel CME Church, where she faithfully served in Sunday School, Epworth League and the Youth Choir. Through the diligence she displayed at the Sunday School conventions, her gifts made room for her and yielded an appointment to the office of Sunday School Convention Secretary when she was yet in the 11th grade.

Upon relocating to Oklahoma City in early adulthood, Mary Helen united with The Church of the Living God, P.G. of T under the pastoral leadership of Elder Archie Long. Her service unto God continued when she was appointed to read the announcements on Sunday mornings and record minutes at business meetings on behalf of the church's secretary, Mother Georgene Richardson. She would later hold the distinct honors of serving within the local and national bodies of The Church of the Living, P.G. of T as Sunday School Teacher, Sunday School Financial and Recording Secretary, Mission President, Willing Worker Mission Member, Trustee Board Secretary, National Scholarship Board, National Financial Secretary, and Deaconess Board. She also had the esteemed honor of serving as a National Mother within The Church of the Living, P.G. of T.

Mary Helen had a special love for children, and she built an illustrious 36-year career as an educator. The most admirable aspect of her career is how she started off as a Head Start teacher at the Children's House Head Start Center and climbed the ladder of success all the way to the pinnacle point of Director. Her impact was so great that the Center was renamed Mary Helen Nelson Head Start upon her retirement in 2001. Further, Mrs. Nelson's career was flanked by numerous milestones including serving as a Child Development Associate Representative and being employed by the Early Childhood Professional Reorganization office in Washington, D.C.

Understanding the significance of attaining a formal education, Mary Helen acquired a B.S. degree from the University of Central Oklahoma and a Master's degree from Oklahoma City University. She is a Certified

Montessori Teacher, and she has obtained further studies in Human Development from the University of Oklahoma.

Mary Helen's support of early childhood development is evidenced by her providing training and heading many committees in the following areas and through the following affiliations: Montessori/Primary Level American Montessori Educator; Head Start Training & Technical Assistance; Child Development/ Classroom Management; Child Watch Development; Human Development & Business Management; Linking Our Voices Committee; Head Start Policy Council; Core Knowledge Curriculum; Simply Phonics/Simple Reading; Smart Start of Central Oklahoma; State Publication Chairperson, Oklahoma Association for Education of Young Children; Francis Tuttle Early Childhood Development Advisory Board; Oklahoma City Community College Early Childhood Advisory, Chairperson; Success by Six Task Force; Executive Board Member OACUS; Oklahoma City/County Head Start Policy Board; Success By Six Task Force; National Head Start Association; National Association for the Education of Young Children; Early Care and Education Task Force; Oklahoma City/County Policy Council Board; National Association For The Education of Young Children; Southern Association on Children Under Six; Oklahoma Association on Children Under Six; and the Early Childhood Education Task Force. Her civic involvement included the Urban League of Greater Oklahoma City, Inc. and the Urban League Guild of Greater Oklahoma City, Inc.

In her spare time, Mary Helen enjoyed reading, meeting new people, traveling, loved "Shopping" and spoiling her grandchildren. She cherished her trip with her husband Roy along with Cheryl, Lionel and grandson Terrence to Switzerland, Italy and France as her all time favorite. She truly loved life, and she daily exhibited her commitment to transform the world. Mary Helen Nelson will be remembered as a gentle giant, a precious gem, a quiet storm and a legend in her own time. Undoubtedly, she was all that and so much more.

Having completed her earthly assignment, she answered God's voice on October 11, 2014. She leaves to forever cherish her memory: husband, Roy C. Nelson; children: Sandra Williams Oklahoma City, OK, Cheryl (Lionel) Woodyard, Atlanta, GA, Darrell Williams, Oklahoma City, OK, Demeitrus (Aisha) Williams, Carmel, IND, Royce Nelson, Atlanta, GA, and Jalalu Kalvert (Suzanne) Nelson, Bern, Switzerland; sisters: Billye (James) Coffey, and Doris Williams both of Oklahoma City, OK; grandchildren: DeAndre Williams, Danica William, Tara Williams, Terrence Woodyard, Kirstie Neal, Demetria Williams, Lemuel Williams, Marketia Nelson, and Ashley Williams; seven great grandchildren, sister-in-law, Bobbie Nelson, Oklahoma City, OK; and a host of other relatives and friends.

