



Ms. Elsie Taylor Jordan

August 26, 1926 - February 7, 2014

On a summer day, August 26, 1926 to be exact, in Alexandria, Virginia, Rozier and Maggie Charity welcomed a feisty baby girl they named Elsie. This wonderful gift made her transition from this life to life everlasting on Friday, February 7, 2014 at Birmingham Green Long Term Care Facility in Manassas, Virginia surrounded by her children and many other loving family members.

Ms. Elsie or Biscuit as she was affectionately called was educated in the Alexandria Public School System having graduated from Parker-Gray High School. At Parker- Gray, she was very active and was one of their best cheerleaders.

She married her high school sweetheart, Gerald Carleton Thomas, who preceded her in death. To this union was born three children. She later married Alexandria native, Llewellyn Henry Taylor, who also preceded her in death. Four more children were added during this union. She later met and married Edward Jordan.

Ms. Elsie was a lifelong member of the Ebenezer Baptist Church. She was not a pew sitter, she was an active member. She helped to put to rest the old adage that “children should be seen and not heard”. She was a committed advocate for the youth not only in Ebenezer but throughout the community. At Ebenezer, she served in many capacities. In 1968 she co-founded the Gospeliers. This group ministered through song at the church for over 40 years. She was one of the organizers and supporters of Youth Church which was held every second Sunday in the Hargrave-Collins Education Building. The Youth Church had Junior Deacons, Junior Missionaries, Junior Ushers and a Youth Pastor. Most Sundays, it was standing room only. Ms. Elsie recognized the importance of witnessing to the youth at a young age based on the scripture---“train up a child in the way that they should go and when they get old, they won’t depart from it”. Birthed out of that Youth Church experience were at least eight Ministers, four who have gone on to be Pastors. Ms. Elsie organized and developed the Prison Ministry at Ebenezer and encouraged other churches to get involved. That ministry is still active today. Ms. Elsie authored many plays and dramatic presentations that were performed by the youth and young adults of

Ebenezer. One of the most memorable presentations was her version of the popular Gospel television show—"Spread A Little Sunshine". She portrayed the legendary radio host, the late Lucille Banks Robinson Miller and she wrote all the commercials for the station breaks. She is also most remembered for her service to Ebenezer's General Gospel Chorus. She was one of their premier soloists. When she was not ministering with the Gospel Chorus, she was singing throughout the Washington Metropolitan Area and on the radio with The Charity Sisters, which included her sisters, Irene and Margie. They sounded like angels from heaven!

One of Ms. Elsie's early jobs was for Space Avionics where she learned how to assemble walkie talkies. She was so good at crossing wires, she hooked up telephones in almost every room in the house—including the bathroom. When someone called, it was deafening!

Her work in the Alexandria Community is detailed in the recent book, "African Americans of Alexandria, Virginia—Beacons of Light in the Twentieth Century". Here is an excerpt from that book:

"As a Social Worker for the Hopkins House Association, Ms. Elsie helped ensure that citizens in the community had shelter, food, health care and other necessities. Her special interest in young people led her to give assistance and encouragement to many. Through her teaching and example, they learned the value of education and self-worth. She taught them to aspire to do their best, encouraging many to go on to become successful in business and achieve leadership positions in their community. She was an advocate for the seniors in Alexandria. She developed and organized the Crunch Bunch, a program for senior citizens that still operates today at the Charles Houston Recreation Center. During the early days she provided them to medical appointment and do their shopping.

1970 she began working for the Alexandria Sheriff's Department. During her tenure she initiated efforts that led to more diverse demographics in the recruiting and hiring policies of the department. While at the jail she was instrumental in stopping a planned prison break by the inmates.

She played a vital role in bringing about social change in the City of Alexandria, often challenging city council members, the mayor and other officials when she believed the city fell short in its handling of social issues.

She worked diligently to fight against drug addiction in the city. She was instrumental in establishing the first methadone program at the Alexandria Health Department. In 1989 she testified before the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging on the effects of the crack epidemic on seniors who ended up caring for crack babies born to their children and grandchildren due to the parents addiction. She also worked with Virginia Senator Wiley Mitchell to petition the state for more drug rehabilitation programs as an alternative to jail time.

She was a co-founder of the Community Action Team (CAT), which worked under the direction of the Alexandria Police Department to help quell violence in the city during times of community unrest by keeping youth off the streets and out of trouble. She nearly single-handedly prevented the violence in Washington, DC from spilling over into Alexandria after the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King.

She has received many awards and proclamations for her work, including a Medal of Valor from the Alexandria Police Department, a Proclamation proclaiming Elsie Taylor Jordan Day on the occasion of her sixtieth birthday and the Mary Church Terrell Award from the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice.”

Ms. Elsie became the surrogate “Mom” for many of the young people in the community. There was always room in her house for one more. On Thanksgiving, the table would extend from the dining room all the way to the front door. She fed everybody, clothed everybody and gave shelter when needed. She always tried to look for the good in everyone. She did not condone wrong doing but she always tried to give you positive reinforcement so you wouldn’t keep making the same mistakes.

Ms. Elsie loved her children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and great-great grandchildren. They were her pride and joy. They in turn treated her like a ‘Queen”, doting on her every chance they got. She liked nothing better than spending time with them. She would organize talent shows, jumped rope with them and she played jacks better than anyone in the neighborhood. She raised her children to follow their dreams and to remember that mistakes or bad choices won’t stop you unless you allow them too. She was a die hard Washington Redskins fan!

There will never be another like her. To quote Congressman Jim Moran upon hearing of her death—“She was just iconic”. We will miss her more than words can say and we will be eternally grateful for all that she poured into us especially the example of her faith in God and her love of Jesus Christ.

She leaves to cherish her memory and carry on her legacy, one son, Geoffrey C. Thomas (Lee), Minister Becky Mays Jenkins (Clarence), Liz Dixon (Harry), Kim Smith Roberson (Gerald), Polly L. Green, and Sandy Taylor Hawkins (Stacy); twenty-one grandchildren, thirty great grandchildren and two great-great grandchildren; one brother, Deacon William Charity; one sister, Marjorie Burts (Albert); one sister-in-law, Mary Charity; nieces, nephews and a host of loving relatives and friends. She was predeceased by her daughter, Vernie Wanzer, her grandson, Bruce Wanzer, her parents, three spouses, four brothers and three sisters.

Cemetery

Bethel Cemetery

Wilkes Street

Alexandria, VA, 22314

Events

FEB **Viewing** 06:00PM - 08:00PM

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Ebenezer Baptist Church

909 Queen Street, Alexandria, VA, US, 22314

FEB **Viewing** 09:00AM - 11:00AM

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Ebenezer Baptist Church

909 Queen Street, Alexandria, VA, US, 22314

FEB **funeral service** 11:00AM

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