CELEBRATING

JOHNSTOWN'S

HERITAGE LEADERS

FRIDAY, JULY 20, 2012
5:30 PM

THE USHERS UNION CIRCA
1939 - 1942

A COMBINED MEETING OF ALL THE USHERS IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCHES IN JOHNSTOWN
THEY MET EVERY 3RD SUNDAY AFTERNOON OF EACH MONTH

Introduction of Heritage Leaders VI

In 1980, Chester Higgins Jr., staff photographer to the New York Times and author of many photographic journals depicting African American Life, published ELDER GRACE, THE NOBOLITY OF AGING. It is a powerful book of portraits depicting 80 African American elders and their thoughts about aging. Through the lens of his camera, he presents individuals who have passed through the proverbial storms of life and landed safely.

The Heritage Leaders of 2012 are excellent role models for aging gracefully. Most are both physically active and mentally alert. They serve as baby sitters, disciplinarians, cooks, teachers, bankers and taxi-cab drivers for the "grands" and "great grands." They bask in the activities of their progeny attending dance recitals, sports events, plays and honors assemblies. These dedicated men and women jet to weddings, family reunions, college graduations, and pro football events!

Each member has faced and conquered personal tragedies. They have a positive outlook on life. Our elders seek the comfort of god's word in biblical passages, hymns and gospel music. They are the pillars of our religious institutions: served as deacons, deaconesses, evangelists, mothers of the church, missionaries and in every church ministry.

These noble elders are informed citizens. Their flat screen TV's are tuned into such channels as CNN, FOX, MSNBC, INSP, BET, Soap Opera Digest, QVC, HIST and WJAC TV. They are the ones that keep the Tribune-Democrat from becoming obsolete.

Because our awardees were once excluded from the political process, they are politically active. All but one of these men and women voted in the last local, state and national elections. They lauded the election of Barack Obama, the first Black President of the United States. While all were not pleased with his policies for the first term, our heritage leaders want to provide the President with a second opportunity.

Finally, these noble 2012 Heritage Leaders believe in **LOVE**; Love for God, self, family and friends. They are content and satisfied with life's journey.

We, the members of the Heritage Committee salute our Elders, may their lives continue to be lived with dignity and grace.

Claudia B. Jones

ELDER GRACE
By Maya Angelou

THE GRACE OF THESE ELDERS HAS BEEN GRAVELY EARNED AND SORELY PAID FOR.

THE WINDS BLEW
THE STORMS RAGED
AND THEY STOOD LIKE PILLARS

ELDER GRACE

THE RAINS CAME
AND THE SNOW FELL
AND THEY STOOD LIKE GIANTS

ELDER GRACE

THEY LIVE TIME WITH SUCH COURAGE
THAT THEY ALLOW THE TRACERIES OF THE YEARS
TO ADOM THEIR FACES

ELDER GRACE

THEY RECALL THE YEARS WITH FAMILIAR STORIES
"THAT WAS THE YEAR WHEN BUDDY
JOINED UP WITH THE ARMY
AND WE WON THAT WAR."

ELDER GRACE

AND
"THAT WAS THE YEAR WHEN
IF BAD HEALTH HAD SLAPPED ME IN THE FACE,
I WOULD NOT HAVE RECOGNIZED IT."

ELDER GRACE

THESE ELDERS OF GRACE SHOW THAT POVERTY NEED NOT GRIND THE SPIRIT INTO DUST, NOR SHOULD PROSPERITY SEPARATE THE FORTUNATE FROM THE NEEDY.

THEIR RESOLUTE FACES ATTEST TO THE MOUNTAINS CLIMBED AND THE RIVERS FORGED.

THE SOMBERNESS OF THEIR EYES IS EVIDENCE OF THE DEMONS THEY HAVE FACED DOWN AND THE DESPAIR THEY HAVE OVERCOME.

AND THEN THERE ARE THOSE SMILES.

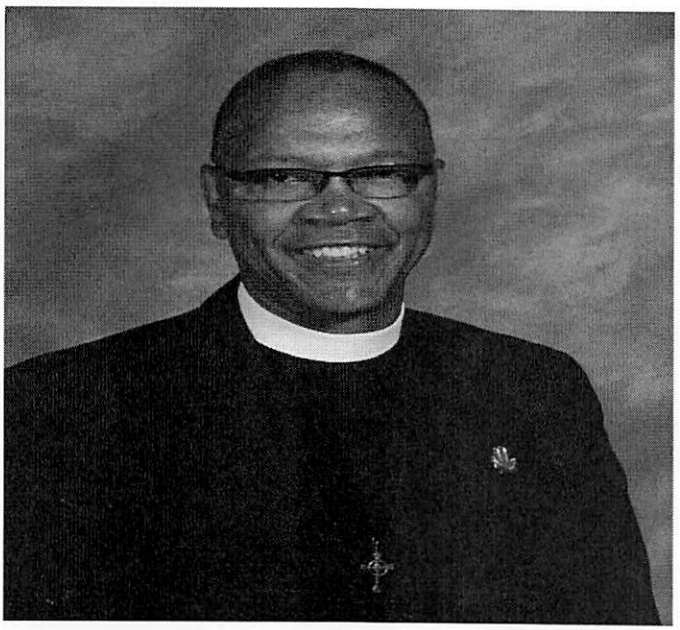
HALLELUJAH FOR THOSE SMILES

THEY TANTALIZE, "DON'T YOU WISH YOU KNEW WHAT I KNOW" AND I'VE BEEN THERE AND DID THAT BEFORE YOU EVEN KNEW THERE EXISTED."

THE SMILES REASSURE, "LIFE IS WORTH THE LIVING OF IT. DO IT WITH YOUR WHOLE HEART."

MAYA ANGELOU

Guest Speaker
Rev. Andrew T. Bradley



Rev. Andrew T. Bradley received his call in Christian Ministry, February, 1964 while a member of Jefferson Memorial First Born Church in the Living God, Johnstown, PA under the tutelage of the late Bishop Joseph McGauley and Elder Henry Slade. Rev. Bradley was ordained Elder in February, 1971, having established Faith Temple, First Born Church in Maysville, North Carolina.

In 1981, Rev. Bradley transferred to the African Methodist Episcopal Church, ordained a Deacon, and served as Associate Pastor for twelve years, until appointed pastor of St. Paul, A.M.E. Church, Oberlin, PA and Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church, Columbia, PA

In 1988, Bradley transferred to the United Methodist Church where he was appointed to the Gatchelville Charge; Cross Roads and Prospect Churches in Southern York, PA. Pastor Bradley was then appointed to Camp Curtin Memorial-Mitchell UMC, Harrisburg, PA.

In 2012, Rev. Bradley was appointed Pastor of the Christ United Methodist Church of Shippensburg, PA.

Rev. Bradley earned a Bachelor of Arts degree (Magnum Cum Laude), in Behavioral Sciences from Shaw University, Raleigh, North Carolina; a Master of Arts in Mental Health Counseling and Consultation from the University of the District of Columbia; and a Master of Arts in Mental Health Counseling and Consultation from the University of the District of Columbia, and a Master of Divinity degree from Lancaster Theological Seminary of the United Church of Christ, Lancaster, PA

Pastor Bradley is married to Annice B. Bradley, they are parents of three children; Andrew Jr., Elizabeth and James and grandparents of six grandchildren; William, James, Selah, Ayre, Ella and Sara.

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GENEVIEVE ANTHONY
JUNE 7, 1925

Just think
You're not here by chance
But by god's choosing
His hand formed you
And made you
The person that you are
He compares you to no one else
You are one of a kind
You lack nothing
That his grace can't give you
He has allowed you to be here
At this time in history
To fulfull his special purpose
For this generation

"Author Unknown"

Genevieve Cunningham was born in Islin, Pennsylvania on June 7, 1925. She was one of nine children born to Leo and Jessie Cunningham. When Mr. Cunningham obtained a job in the coal mines on the outskirts of Johnstown, the family moved to Huber Street in Old Conemaugh Borough. Genevieve enjoyed the life of a typical teenager; attending school, going to dances and roller skating. Yet, she yearned for independence and a career that would showcase her talents. She became a licensed beautician. Her innate sense of style and genuine love for the craft helped to grow her customer base. "Ginny" never limited her practice to all women or African Americans. From 1955 to 1994, her shop was located at 832 Sherman Street. Among her specialties were perms and natural hair weaves.

Genevieve was an accomplished swimmer and was a member of the YWCA from 1955 to 2000. She gained recognition for completing the 500 mile swim program. At age 58, she learned to play the piano and the organ. After the death of her husband, Robert Anthony, Genevieve began to travel. The customers in the beauty salon learned of her escapades for months after her trips.

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

Genevieve Anthony

Favorite Song:

Amazing Grace

Favorite Bible Scripture:

Psalm 23

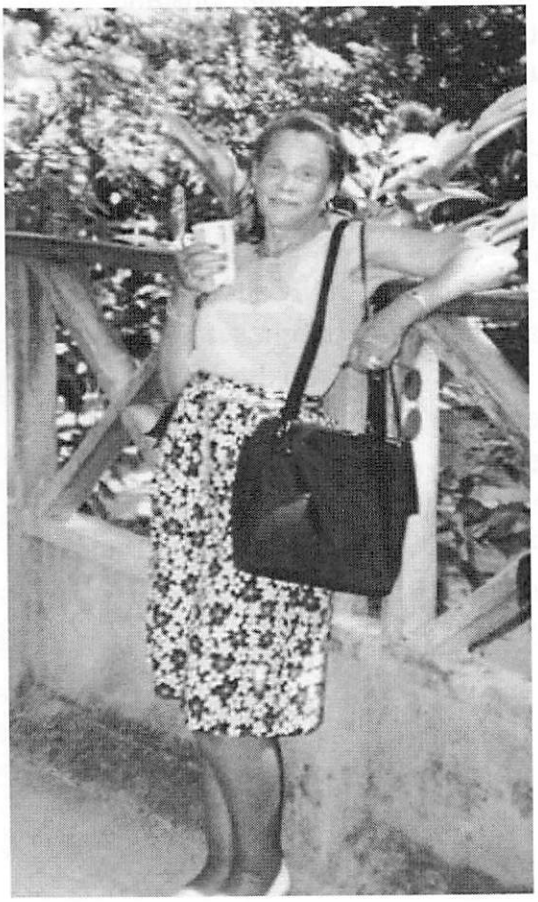
What Advice would you give young people today?

"Live a good life and enjoy the life you live and treat your fellow man the way you like to be treated.

Genevieve and her husband Robert were faithful church members. Raised as Baptists, they held memberships in Pleasant Hill and St. James Missionary Baptist Church. In 1985, Genevieve felt called to her own ministry. She trained in biblical ministry and received her certification from Greater Work of Pittsburgh, PA. As an ordained minister, she was called to speak at many churches regardless of race or denomination.

Genevieve is the mother of 6 children. Wilbert Cooper (deceased), Leo Cooper, Leroy Williams (deceased), Frank Allen Williams, John Robert Anthony and Letta Williams (deceased). She has fifteen (15) grandchildren and five (5) great grandchildren. She presently resides at the Cambria Care Center in Ebensburg, PA.

EVELYN D. BANKS
FEBRUARY 10, 1927



Where in the world is Evelyn Banks? Is it New Orleans? Hawaii? Bahamas, Wildwood, New Jersey or Sight and Sound in Lancaster, PA? She certainly has been to all those locations and many more. As you might guess, traveling is Evelyn's passion. After the death of her husband, Fred Banks and after all the children left home, Evelyn decided to see the world. In the beginning, she traveled with her friend, Catherine Cashaw, now daughter, Vanessa is her travel buddy. At the end of the summer, Mrs. Banks plans to visit the Holy Land! Quite a feat for the little girl who grew up in Franklin Borough!

Evelyn Burks was born on February 10, 1927 in Johnstown, PA. Her parents were Arie Perry Burks and Jesse Burks. Arie moved to New York when Evelyn was a very young girl. She and her brother Calvin were raised in Franklin Borough by her father Jesse and grandparents, Chris and Georgia Perry. At age 15, the family moved to Prospect. It was there that Evelyn met Catherine O'Neal. Like many other girls of her age, they started walking to school daily and soon became best friends. Evelyn's work history involved a number of low paying jobs, pressing clothes at Berg's, washing dishes at Woolworth's and cleaning off the tables at Melody Lounge. In 1966, Evelyn was hired as a Nurse's Aide and retired after 26 years of service.

Evelyn was a popular teenager. She had many friends but it was Fred Banks, widower and father of toddler Beatrice, who captured her attention. They married in 1949 when Beatrice was 3 years old. Evelyn and Fred had 5 children; Jesse, Vanessa, Kevin, Deatrice, and Lucinda. They are all well-educated and have thriving careers. Evelyn also has 14 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren to round out the Banks family. Fred passed away in 1991.

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

EVELYN D. BANKS

Church Affiliation:

Member of Mt. Sinai Institutional Baptist Church
Retired Usher

Favorite Song:

Precious Lord

Favorite Bible Scripture:

Psalm 23

Favorite Saying:

"The Lord will not put any more on you than you are able to bear!"

Now that she has retired and the children have grown up. Evelyn travels at every opportunity.

The family spends holidays, graduations and birthdays together when it is convenient. Evelyn is most grateful for the many blessings that the Lord has bestowed upon her; including her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. She is content because she doesn't have any family responsibilities.

Evelyn has a second love ~ Doll Collecting. Since the early 80's she has been purchasing porcelain dolls from the Danbury and Franklin Mint Companies. Her living room is filled with dolls of all kinds, white, black, male and female. The collection extends to the upstairs and includes a special set of Prince Charles and Princess Diana in their wedding outfits.

ELOISE "DICKEY" BARNETTE
FEBRUARY 23, 1927

I Do Not Ask For Any Crown
But That Which All May Win;
Nor Try To Conquer Any World
Except The One Within....
By
"Louisa May Alcott"

Married to Collie Barnette (deceased), and mother of five, Eloise was a "stay at home mom." Her daughter Jackie describes her mother as an excellent cook. When she and her siblings; Collie, Robert, William and Charlene came home from school, dinner was always ready. Some of their favorite dishes were: chili, stuffing, egg pie, sweet potato pie, banana pudding and chocolate chip cookies!

Born in Charlotte, NC in 1927, Eloise came to Johnstown with her parents, Blanche and Ernest in 1943. As with other families, they came to make a better life for the family and the steel industry offered that opportunity. The family settled in Minersville. As a young lady, Eloise worked for a short time operating the elevator at the Fort Stanwix Hotel and later at Arrow Furniture Store. Her cousin, Doris Ann Hill lived with the family. The two (2) were often mistaken for sisters, especially when they sported their hairstyles by Mrs. Martin. In the 1950's, the deep Marcella Wave was the rage. Both Dickey and Dolly Ann were the poster girls for that hair style!

Eloise began to walk as a pastime. When she moved to Oakhurst Homes Housing Project, her daily routine was to walk on the track behind the old Garfield Junior High School (Presently, the Johnstown Middle School). In the winter, Eloise would ride the bus to the Galleria and join the Mall walkers there. She became known by the bus driver as the "Lady In the Red Hat!" According to her daughter, Jackie, Eloise's nickname was "speedy". When Jackie's job at Bestform Co. participated in the March of Dimes Walk-A-Thon, she always enlisted her mother to substitute for her!

Among Eloise Barnette's favorite pastimes are participating in the birthday parties of her 7 grandchildren, 7 great grandchildren and 4 great-great grand children, visiting with relatives in Charlotte, NC, shopping and going out to eat. She is blessed with a number of friends, Isabelle Robinson, Charlene Wilson and Mildred Jones.

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

Eloise "Dickey" Barnette

Favorite Song:

Enjoys All Gospel Music

Favorite Bible Scripture:

Psalm 23

Advice to Young People Today:

"Always be a listener instead of a talker and you will never get into trouble"

Eloise's Moment of Laughter:

When Doris (Dolly Ann) Mickens lived with the family, Eloise's sons, Bobby and Sonny went to wake her up to come and eat.

Well, Dolly Ann was slow to rise, so Bobby and Sonny sprinkled baby powder in her hair and cut it!

Eloise's children, Bobbie and Jackie, describe their mother as a "strong black woman who raised 3 tough boys. She always had a smile on her face, and no one knew when she had a problem." And she never met a stranger!

At this time in her life, Mrs. Barnette is very content, and feels grateful for waking up every morning. For the past two (2) years, Eloise has been attending the Senior Life Program daily. She says she enjoys the meals and the daily activities; sing-a-longs, current events and the clients. A lifelong member of the Shiloh Baptist Church, Mrs. Barnette serves as the Head of the Mother's Board!

ETHEL GERALDINE "HOWLING" CARR JANUARY 25, 1926

In 2010 at a Fashion Show sponsored by The Hat Ladies, several "seasoned women were chosen as models. Among them was "Geraldine" Howling Carr. As she passed by the audience, someone asked, "Who Is That Lady?" A whisper from the back said, "Oh, that's Jackie Lightfoot and Rodney Howling's mother." "No Way!" was the rebuttal. While many of the women in Johnstown who are 70+ may get the same inquiry and the same reaction, this time it was directed at Mrs. Carr. Her youthful appearance and sprightly walk contradicted her age. She is blessed with children and grandchildren who have succeeded in life. They are well educated and play a prominent role in this society.

Mrs. Carr is a mother of 7 children; Jacqueline, Rodney, Brenda, Deborah, Sylvia, Charlene and Stanley, Jr. She also has 1 stepson, Cleo. She has 29 grandchildren, 45 great grandchildren and 2 great-great grandchildren.

Ethel Geraldine Howling was born in Lebanon, Tennessee on January 25, 1926. She moved to Johnstown in 1932. The family's first home was in Jones Alley in Cambria City. Her father found a job in Johnstown because her Aunt Sadie and Uncle Lee Bolton were already settled in the area. She came from a large family; 4 sisters; Helen, twins Doris and Dorothy, Arlene and 3 brothers, Arthur, Robert and half-brother Luke Debose, Jr. They have all passed away except Arlene.

The Howlings lived in a variety of locations; Conemaugh Borough, Prospect, Woodvale and then to Kernville. Ethel's education was determined by where she lived at the time. She attended grade school at Hudson Street, Ebensburg Road and Woodvale Elementary. As with many of the youth at that time period, Ethel did not graduate from Johnstown High School. She did not have enough credits, so she quit right before graduation. "That's why I made my children go and graduate."

Ethel's work history includes:

- Dishwasher for F.W. Woolworth's for two months. African Americans could not eat there so she quit.
- Housework
- Worked in the kitchen and bathhouse at Sunnehanna Country Club
- Ran the elevator at the Fort Stanwix Hotel

- Worked at a summer home with her aunt for 4 months
- Housekeeper

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

ETHEL GERALDINE "HOWLING" CARR

Favorite Song:

Just A Closer Walk With Thee

Favorite Bible Scripture:

Psalm 23

Advice to Young People Today:

Listen and don't think you know everything."

Among Ethel's most memorable family moments was her marriage to Stanley P. Carr, Sr. and the birth of her children. Family weddings, birthday parties and cookouts come in second.

As with most individuals of her generation, Ethel loved the church picnics and choir unions at Duke's Memorial.

"When I was young, I watched my sister play softball and also watched the Dixie Dukes (Johnstown's Black Baseball Team). I also enjoyed dancing and roller skating." Hat shows take first place today!

When asked what makes her laugh? Mrs. Carr replied, "Looking at old photographs, watching Golden Girls and other comic shows and roller skating in the house makes me laugh!"

One certainty expressed by most of the heritage leaders describes the importance of the Black Church and its activities in their lives. Ethel "Geraldine" Carr is no exception. She enjoyed Sunday School and BYPU, the youth bible study group of the Baptist Church. Today she is content and is most grateful for her life and all that it included.

CATHERINE O'NEAL CASHAW
NOVEMBER 14, 1927

Catherine O'Neal was born on November 14, 1927 in the Conemaugh Valley Memorial Hospital. She is the youngest of 6 children of George W. and Annie Lawrence O'Neal. The death of her father in 1933 brought a hardship to the family. While attending Hudson Street School, Catherine worked for school teacher, Grace Thomas to supplement the family income. Her duties included house work and paying bills. During the flood of 1936, the family lived on Hill Alley. Catherine remembers vividly the sight of the Baumer Street Building being washed down across the bridge. Her mother and sister were able to make it home safely from their jobs. In the 1940's, project homes in Prospect were made available to low income families. The O'Neals' rented a unit and moved from Conemaugh Borough to Prospect. Catherine met Evelyn Burks who was destined to become one of her best friends. They attended the former Joseph Johns Jr. High School together. In 10th grade, Catherine was presented with the good citizenship award by the principal, Scott Lackey. In 1946 she graduated from Johnstown High School. One of her favorite subjects was book keeping; she used those skills working for H&R Block as an adult. After graduation, Catherine moved to Pittsburgh to help raise her sister's child. For a short period, she worked in a factory.

In her 20's, Catherine, like so many young people of the day was diagnosed with tuberculosis. She spent 18 months in treatment at the Cresson Hospital. While Catherine recuperated she took advantage of the educational opportunities offered at the center and continued to study book keeping and typing. Healed from that dreaded disease, Catherine returned home to start her life and work career over again. In 1956, Lee Hospital offered classes that trained LPNs (Licensed Practical Nurses). Catherine completed the course graduating third in her class; then was hired by Memorial Hospital, where she later retired.

When Catherine started to date William Cashaw, Jr., Bill was a widow with 4 children. She confesses that she had as much love for the children as she had for Bill. When they finally married in 1956, the family included Catherine and Bill; children Curtis, Nathanial O'Neal, William the 3rd, Bernard and Wilma. Bill passed away in 1992. Catherine's greatest joy has been traveling. Her first trip was to the Bahamas. Later she joined Evelyn Banks, Vanessa, and other relatives and friends to sightsee in exotic locations like Hawaii, Jamaica, Niagara Falls and other exotic and fun locations.

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

Catherine O'Neal Cashaw

Favorite Song:

I Found the Answer

Favorite Bible Scripture:

John 14; Verses 1 - 4

Advice to Young People Today:

Have confidence in yourself. Don't let others influence you.

One of the most traumatic experiences that Catherine described was the night of the 1977 flood. She went to the movies in the Richland Mall Theater Complex. All that she remembers was that it was a scary film; because the fear she experienced driving home through the down pour and the lightning was a nightmare that will be forever etched in her memory.

Catherine attended church at St. James Missionary Baptist Church and later moved her membership to Pleasant Hill in Prospect. At Pleasant Hill, Catherine served as an usher, sang in the Vesper Choir, worked in the Kitchen and was a member of ESP (Extra Step People).

In Prospect, Catherine was known for taking her friends and neighbors to and from the doctors. She had such a generous spirit that she became known as the "Neighborhood Taxi Cab!"

She takes great pride in her children and their offspring. She is blessed with 10 grandchildren, 12 great grandchildren and 1 great-great grandchild!

SARA JANE (WHEELER) CLYBURN-JOY
JUNE 5, 1926

If the NAACP were to nominate a senior for the cover of the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons), Sara Joy qualifies as an excellent choice! While she is certainly photogenic, it is her life choices that stand out. For the last 23 years, she has been a volunteer for the ARC "American Handicap Agency". She served as Vice President of the East Conemaugh Neighborhood Group, an arm of Community Action, volunteered with the local Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and Meals on Wheels. For the last 40 years, Sara has served as the Judge of Elections Precinct #1 for East Conemaugh Borough. Since 1968 Sara has been a mentor of the Bethel AME church where she has served as a Communion Stewardess, an ordained Deaconess for 8 years, and Mother of the Church for 15 years. Her role in the Joy family is extensive. She counsels, baby sits, acts as a taxi, cooks and is a confidant for generations of family members.

Born on June 5, 1926 to Ella Jane and James Wheeler, Sara was 1 of 3 children. Her brothers are Henry and Jimmy. After an aunt passed away, the Wheelers took in her 5 children and raised them. The Wheeler household was a blended family, typical of the times when family took care of their OWN!

At the age of 12, Sara had to move 3 miles away in order to attend Jackson High School in Camden, SC. In order to pay for her room and board, she helped out with the household chores.

At age 16, Sara married Harrison Clyburn. He was drafted into the Air Force during WWII and sent to Orlando, FL. While they were stationed there, Sara attended nursing school. Later, she enlisted into the services as a Private 1st Class and was promoted to 1st Sargeant. While working at the base hospital, Sara described how often she was treated as a non-person, often referred to as "Nigger"! After their discharges, the Clyburn's relocated to Connecticut to join a number of Sara's siblings Most of them had served honorably in some branch of the armed services.

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

Sara Jane (Wheeler) Clyburn-Joy

Favorite Song:

Jesus Keep Me Near The Cross

Favorite Bible Scripture:

Psalm 23

Advice to Young People Today:

Stay focused on what you believe to be Important!

From 1948 - 1953, Sara and Harrison lived in New York City. In 1950, Sara graduated as an LPN and did private duty nursing where ever she was sent. The Clyburn's were hired by the president of the Chase Manhattan Bank as live-ins to take care of his 2 children and mother. They were provided a 3 room apartment in the back of the house. In 1953, Sara returned to South Carolina to provide care for her ailing mother. Unfortunately, while Harrison was driving to visit her, he was killed in a car wreck!

In 1959, Sara married Dan Joy. Their families had adjacent properties and since Sara remained in South Carolina after her first husband died, they often saw each other when he visited his home in the summer. Dan was living in Conemaugh at the time and working in Bethlehem Steel. While Dan returned to Pennsylvania, Sara remained on the farm. It wasn't until July 31, 1960 that Sara with both her parents drove to Conemaugh. "What a Culture Shock!" According to Sara, it took a while to adjust to the community. Her parents stayed with her until her mother died in 1965. By that time, they had purchased a home on Greeve Street. The Joys were the parents of one (1) son, Daniel. Daniel followed in the footsteps of the family, after college he went into the army.

At this stage in her life, Sara Joy is at peace. She is most grateful for her good health, family and relationship with the church.

Sara is a member of the Golden Star Chapter 9, Order of Eastern Star: Worthy matron of Johnstown and Grand Ruth of Pittsburgh.

ANNA "MATEO" GORDON
APRIL 12, 1922

A Pattern for Living

"Love one Another As I have Loved You"
May see impossible to do.
But if you try to trust and believe.
Great are the joys that you receive.
For love makes us patient, understanding and kind.
And as we judge with our hearts and not our minds.
For as soon as love enters the heart's open door,
The faults we once saw are not there anymore.
And the things that seem wrong begin to look right
When viewed in the softness of love's gentle light.
For love works in ways that are wondrous and strange,
And there is nothing in life that love cannot change.
And all that God promised still someday come true
When you love one another the way He loved you.

By Helen Steiner Rice

Anna Julia Mateo was born in Manhattan, New York on April 12, 1922. She is of Spanish heritage and at age 16 graduated from Vocational/Technical School. She worked as a nurse in New York.

Anna came to Johnstown in 1942. Her sister wanted her to meet her friend's brother. And as Anna put it, she and Goldie "Hooked Up" and the rest is history. They married in 1946 when she was 24 years old.

Anna and Goldie settled in Franklin and began their family. They are the parents of ten children; Goldie Jr., Phillip, Cisco', Dr. Joe, David, Hatchet Gary, Anna, Alicia, Beatrice, Dottie and Tettie (deceased). She is proud of her offspring and boasts that she has 31+ grandchildren, and 51+ great grandchildren.

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

Anna "Mateo" Gordon

Favorite Song:

Anything
by Barry White (secular)

Favorite Bible Scripture:

Psalm 23

Favorite Saying:

"Oh well!"

Anna faced discrimination in the work place, but oddly enough was accepted in the bars and eating establishments around Johnstown. She recalls going into a bar and waiting on her friends. They were refused entrance because they were Black! Anna noted some happy moments at the Black establishments. According to her, she and Charles Mickens were the best dancers around. Because of her husband's African American Heritage, Anna and her family were a stable part of the Black community. Even though she was Spanish, she learned to cook soul food from Mrs. Fields and Ida Gray. In fact, the members of Franklin and Conemaugh communities thought that she was one of the "best" cooks in the neighborhood. The family worshipped at Mt. Sinai Baptist Church, the children attended Franklin Schools.
Anna is presently a proud and grateful member of Arbutus Church of the Brethren.

At 90 years of age, Anna Gordon is content. She is most grateful for her beautiful children. As a mother, she taught them how to take care of themselves and to NEVER be sad.

ESTHER MAE (FERGUSON) GRAY
JANUARY 16, 1925

"The doctors tell me I'm in great shape for my age. I eat right and exercise and wear my leather in the winter. My blessings, good health and longevity comes from GOD in Heaven.

My Savior is more than life to me."

Esther Mae Gray

Esther is the second of four children born to Maggie and Thomas Ferguson (mill worker) of the Rosedale section of Johnstown. Her other siblings were Pauline, Samuel and Nathaniel. Esther's father was killed on the job by a runaway train. After this tragedy the family moved several times and finally settled on Bedford Street. When Maggie Ferguson married William Gaines, the family settled in Hooversville. While living there, they raised pigs, chickens and maintained a large victory garden.

In 1949, Esther married the late, Walter Gray. They were the parents of (5) five children; Ida, Josephine, Walter, Charles and Theresa (deceased). There are 16 grandchildren, 21 great grandchildren and 3 great-great grandchildren, with 2 more on the way!

Esther has a great work ethic and enjoyed a long and varied work career. In her youth she had numerous jobs; factory worker at Westinghouse in 1943, dishwasher at Fort Stanwix Hotel, housecleaning and baby sitting in Westmont, for the Glossers, the Replogles and Hahns families. She worked at the American Shoe store, Berg's Clothing and the Bali Bra Factory. In later years Esther earned her High School Diploma and became a certified Nurse's Aide. She was hired at the Lutheran Nursing Home, Rebekkah Manor and finally went into private duty nursing.

Among her patients were the owners of the April and Cambria Jewelry stores. After retirement, Esther and Walter babysat grandchildren, raised foster children. They also raised her brother Samuel's children, Paula and Samuel.

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

Esther Mae (Ferguson) Gray

Favorite Song:

I Have So Much To Thank God For

Favorite Bible Scripture:

John 3:16

Favorite Saying:

If a task is once begun, never leave it till it's done. Be the labor great or small, do it well or not at all.

Music is a big part of Esther's life. She enjoys playing the piano, cymbals and tambourine. She even went to Williams's Music store on Main Street in Johnstown to learn how to play the organ! As a member of the music group, the Piano Gospelets, Esther has performed in most of the Black churches in the city. Since childhood, Esther's creativity in sewing, needlework and embroidery are skills that she passed on to her daughters Ida and Josephine.

Religion plays a major part in the life of Esther Gray. Her mother was the pastor of the First Pentecostal Church of the Mt. Sinai Holy Church of America on Bedford Street. When the Johnstown Expressway was built, it was one of the buildings on Bedford Street that was demolished. From the time they were children, Esther raised her family with a love for the Lord. Their religious training began at the Church of God in Christ on Chestnut Street in Conemaugh, pastored by Elder Crawford Spence. In 1965 the family joined Jefferson Memorial and after years of attendance, transferred their membership to Stevens Memorial Holy Church in 2000. Esther holds the official position as Mother of the Church.

LOUISE FRANCES "MCGINITY" JEFFERSON OCTOBER 20, 1925

Louise McGinity was born on October 20, 1925 in Atlanta, Georgia. She was raised by her grandmother, until the age of 10. While living in Atlanta, she attended the Ebenezer Baptist Church. One of her fondest memories was participating in a Tom Thumb Wedding with her friend, Kristine King, the sister of civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King. When the family relocated to Johnstown, they lived at 180 Prospect Street. Louise completed Joseph Johns Jr. High School and 11th grade at Johnstown High. At 65, Louise went back to school and earned her GED!

Louise and husband John Rollins Jefferson are the parents of 10 children. They include Evelyn, Linda, John Jr. also known as Beaver (deceased), Peggy, Judy, Donna, Juana, Keith, Melanya, and Darryl. Thirty (30) grandchildren; 44 great grandchildren and 13 great-great grandchildren share the Jeffersons' gene pool. Evelyn, Donna and Melanya described growing up in the Jefferson household as if it were a 1980's television sitcom. Louise, a stay at home mom; cooked, canned, and cleaned house constantly. Each winter she lined the family up for their yearly dose of castor oil followed by a sip of orange juice.

Louise was described by her neighbors as a "soft touch." She fed strangers; clothed them and even gave them her last dime! During the Christmas season, John Jefferson cut his own tree and supplied each child with elaborate toys and gifts. The Jefferson's traveled every summer. It might have been a day trip to Glendale Lake, target shooting at Rosedale, horseback riding on Frank Bird's farm or vising relatives in Dalton, Georgia and Cleveland, Ohio.

As a young woman, Louise enjoyed attending the night "clubs." She once sang with a band known as "Fancy Walking Dan."

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

Louise Frances "McGinity" Jefferson

Favorite Song:

I Really Love The Lord

Favorite Bible Scripture:

Psalm 27 and John 3:16

Advice to Young People Today:

"Obey your elders. You must learn to pray"

One of her favorite songs was "***No More In Life***" a ballad that was typical of the times.

No more in life will the tears roll down my cheeks

No more in life will I ever believe

I stopped my dreaming of things that could never be

And now I'm sitting here wondering how I loved you,

And the fool you made of me

No more in life will I ever be so blind

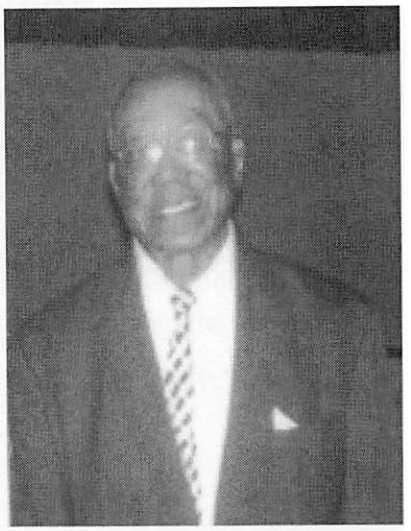
But I can see now that you could never be mine...

No More In Life.....

Throughout the years, Louise shared friendships with Gertrude Troutman, Annie Grayson, Essie Smith, Suzie Blackshire and many others. She also served as Vice Daughter Ruler in the Elks.

Mrs. Jefferson described her religious journey as a continual search for fulfillment in Christ. Her training in Johnstown began at Bethel A.M.E. Church under Rev. James Jarvis. She sang in the choir, taught Sunday School and worked in the kitchen. The family moved their membership to Jefferson Memorial Pentecostal church where Louise became an usher, served on the Nursing Board, Kitchen Club and participated in Bible Study. Finally, Louise settled at the Shiloh Baptist Church. Under Rev. Theodore Tisinger, Jr. she was ordained an Evangelist. At this time in her life, Louise admits that she feels close to God. She credits his grace for allowing her to be a "ten year colon cancer survivor."

NORMAN LEVI JONES, JR.
MARCH 13, 1926



In the Johnstown community, he is known as "Jonesy", a man with a hearty laugh, a big smile and an unabashed love for his wife, Louise and their four (4) daughters; Sharon , Jean, Valerie and Melanie. Norman Levi Jones Jr. was born on March 13, 1926 in Pittsburgh, PA. In 1927, his parents moved to the flats in Prospect on Ebensburg road. He attended school up to and including Joseph Johns Jr. High School. It was his parents who taught him the value of an education. This was so ingrained in Norman, that he was known to tell his daughters the pronouncement that most African Americans gave: "As Long As You Live In My House, You Will Finish School!" Norman and Louise are proud to tell you about their daughters' accomplishments. Their education and work vary from contract negotiator for Lockheed Martin; Federal Drug and Alcohol employee and City Bank Executive. The youngest daughter, Valerie was the second Black student to graduate as valedictorian of Greater Johnstown High School.

From 1943 to 1946, Norman served in the Navy as 3rd Class Petty Officer. He was stationed in San Francisco and later transferred to Fort Wyamee, about 60 miles from Los Angeles. His duties included unloading and transporting military supplies from the ships as they docked. Like other African Americans who served during World War II, Norman experienced the prejudice of those times.

When he returned to Johnstown, Norman was hired by Bethlehem Steel to work in the Franklin Coke Plant as a coke leader. Although, he made a fairly decent living in the coke plant, Norman noted that Black men were given the most dangerous jobs, few promotions and still received the lowest wages in the mill. Several lost their lives working for Bethlehem Steel Corporation. When Ronald Reagan came into office, the mills went down and men were only getting 17-18 hours of work every week. Eventually, Norman retired from this line of work.

Norman is married to the former Louise Simms, and from that union are four daughters; Sharon Lee Jones, Norma Jean Jones, Valerie Jones Joy and Melanie Jones Short. They are proud parents of (5) five grandchildren; Jamar Jones, Lennie Joy, Jr., Breanna Jones, Jasmine Short and Simon Short.

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

Norman Levi Jones, Jr.

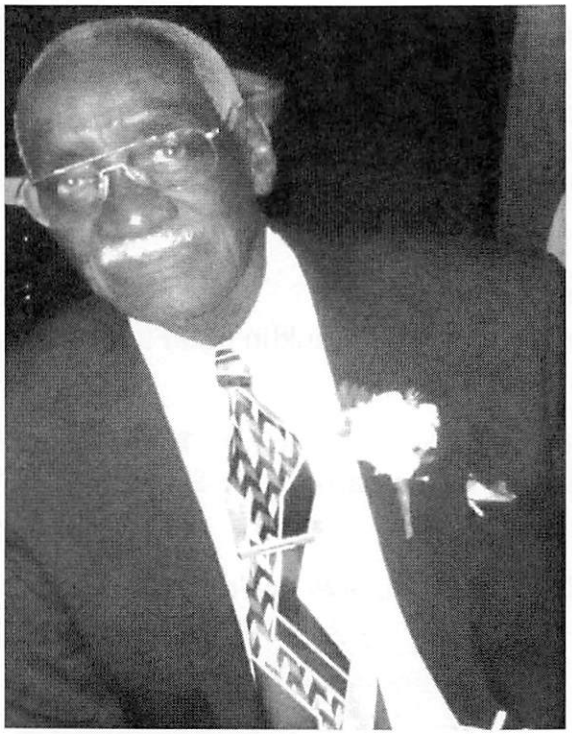
Advice to Young People Today:

"Stay In School. Get as much education as you can. Listen to your parents".

Forty years ago, the family purchased a home in Hornerstown. It was a nice biracial community where everyone took care of their property. Then suddenly white neighbors moved out, houses stood empty and the area deteriorated. In 2011, with all of the children out on their own, Louise and Norman decided to move into the Joseph Johns Towers. Norman and Louise worship at Stevens Memorial Church.

Norman has shared lifetime friendships with Herbert Fry, Arthur Bolton and Wilbur Veney.

CHARLES W. MICKENS
MAY 21, 1927



"If the new American father feels bewildered and even defeated, let him take comfort from the fact that whatever he does in any fathering situation has a fifty percent chance of being right. Having five children has taught me a truth as cosmic as any you can find on a mountain in Tibet; there are no absolutes in raising children. In any stressful situation, fathering is always a roll of the dice. The game may be messy, but I have **never** *found one with more rewards and joys."*

Fatherhood by Bill Cosby

If you have ever been invited to a holiday at the Charles Mickens' home, filled with children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and numerous relatives and friends, you realize that this family embodies the concept of family. Charles sits in his recliner seeming oblivious to the scene playing out around him; TV, laughter, shouts and an occasional whine from the latest great grandchild. One wonders if the head of the Mickens' family agrees with Bill Cosby's assertion.

Charles W. Mickens was born to Marion and Hannah (Williams) Mickens on May 21, 1927 in Conemaugh, PA. He is married to the former Doris Ann Hill. Together they have nine (9) children; Charles, Charlene, Cornell, Carla, Cara, Craig (deceased), Clinton (deceased), Chauncey and Carolyn. There are 18 Grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren.

Charles graduated from the former East Conemaugh High School **where he formed** lasting friendships with Eddie Woolf and Pat Goss. From 1942 - 1944, he worked after school at Woolworth's Five and Ten. In 1945, Charles worked three months for Bethlehem Steel before being drafted into the United States Army.

He served in the army approximately 3 years (1945-1947). He was deployed overseas in Frankfurt, Germany working security, securing weapons and equipment. Pat Goss, a high school friend served with him. Charles was honorably discharged in 1947.

From 1947 to 1950, Charles worked in Bethlehem Steel. In 1950 he became a Bell Hop at Fort Stanwix Hotel. The other bell hops wondered why he was getting most of the clients and tips. The secret was that they waited for the elevator and Charles took the steps to the rooms. He was promoted to Bell Captain. From 1963 to 1989, Charles worked at the Pennsylvania Electric Company as a lineman. He has been retired for 23 years.

Charles' most memorable moments include the following:

1. The first Mickens Family reunion held in the 1960's at the Franklin Ball Field. It was a true family gathering with good food, fun and family.

2. During the 1936 flood, the Mickens family had to vacate their home. They walked from Conemaugh to Woodvale Heights and stayed in the barn on the Samuel Bennett Sr.'s farm.

3. The first East Conemaugh Home Coming. The original planners were John Gordon, Bertha Hill and Ethel Coleman. Former residents of Conemaugh along with those of Greater Johnstown returned home and joined in the celebration.

4. In the 1960's Johnstown had a community newspaper that was oriented towards its African American citizens. Rev. Ernest Swanson wrote an impressive article to shame the Johnstown Businesses for not hiring its Black citizens. His discourse followed with "Blacks buy and drink milk from Sanitary and Gallikers' Dairy Co., they use and pay for electricity generated by Penelec, but none of these organizations hire Blacks...." After that those companies started to hire African Americans. Penelec hired its first African male employees: James Taylor was first," Mr. Yancey was second and Charles Mickens was third!

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

Charles W. Mickens

Favorite Song:

The Clock on the Wall (Secular)
For the Good Times by Al Green

Favorite Bible Scripture:

Psalm 23

Favorite Saying:

It was the Family Motto
One for All and All for One.

Charles is a life member of the Mt. Sinai Institutional Baptist Church where he served as a trustee and the financial secretary under Rev. E.G. Williams. He sang in the Men's Choir during Rev. Joseph Harkless' tenure. He sang lead on the song, "Jesus, My Rock."

Mr. Mickens was also affiliated with Abraham Lodge #32 from Indiana.

At this time in his life, Charles states that he is content with his life and is most grateful for his children; grandchildren and great grandchildren. He is proud of his family and their achievements. He has been blessed to have children who now are serving in the professions of law, community college president, nursing, education, state government, businesses, social service, etc.

Congratulations Dad

Charles W. Mickens

"Believe In….
The Strength of Your Spirit
The Power of Your Purpose
The Dignity of Your Dream

Malcolm X
Betty Shabazz

GARY, PAULETTE & IVENIA

Congratulations Pap

Charles W. Mickens

For the Lord is Good;
His Mercy is Everlasting,
And his truth endures to all

PSALMS 100:5

Michael, April, Taylour & Jalien

Congratulations to

Charles W. Mickens

For being selected as one of the
Johnstown Unit NAACP
2012 Heritage Leaders

May God Bless and Keep You
Love
Glenda

THE BRADLEY FAMILY

SENDS BEST WISHES TO

CHARLES W. MICKENS

for being selected as one of the
Johnstown Unit NAACP
2012 Heritage Leaders

MATTIE HARRISON ROBERTS
JUNE 9, 1926

Just Think
You're Not Here By Chance
But By God's Choosing
His Hand Formed You
And Made You
The Person That You Are
He Compares You To No One Else
You Are One Of A Kind
You Lack Nothing
That His Grace Can't Give You
He Has Allowed You To Be Here
At This Time In History
To Fulfull His Special Purpose
For This Generation

"Author Unknown"

Mattie Roberts enjoys traveling with her favorite niece, Dee Dee, other relatives and friends. Among her most memorable trips were those to Niagara Falls, Maine for the Lobster Fest and Washington, D.C.

Mattie is the only child of Dora and Leroy Harrison. Although she has spent her early years in South Carolina, by 1941 she joined her mother in the Minersville section of Johnstown. As with many African American girls of that time period graduating from school was not a priority. But Mattie did attend Garfield Junior High School.

Her work experience varied; during World War II, Mattie worked in a Defense Plant in Delaware making bullets. She stayed for 1 year and then moved to Coatsville. From Coatsville, Mattie returned back to Johnstown for the last time. Although work was not plentiful, Mattie managed to find a series of minimum wage jobs. These included bussing dishes and cleaning rooms at the Fort Stanwix Hotel, cleaning Glosser Brothers Store and finally being hired by the Lee Hospital as a housekeeper. In 1984, after 25 years as an employee for the hospital, Mattie retired.

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

Mattie Harrison Roberts

Advice to Young People Today:

"Stay In School and Get Your Education."

Mattie was married to Woodrow Roberts for more than 56 years. That union ended when he passed away in 1999. They have no children.

During the flood of 1977, Mattie recalls that her house was flooded. At that time the couple owned two homes adjacent to each other. When the flood waters entered the first floor of the main house, they moved to the second home which had an upper level. While in one house, thieves broke into their home and stole a watch and a can of sardines! Considering the damage that many residents experienced, things might have been worse. Mattie is most grateful for just being alive. She thanked the Lord for "what he has brought her through."

She is a member of Bethel A.M.E. Church in Prospect.

Among the events that Mattie shared that made her laugh uncontrollably was the following: she and friend Bertha went on a trip to Norfolk, VA with Shiloh Baptist Church. The step to get on the bus was higher than normal. When she tried to get on the bus, her leg would not reach the top step. Her friend Bert pushed her from behind, forcing her head under the first row of seats!

RACHEL SIMMS
December 31, 1923

GOOD TIMES

My daddy has paid the rent
And the insurance man is gone
And the light is back on
And my Uncle Brud has hit
For one dollar straight
And they is good times
Good Times
Good Times

My mama has made bread
And grampaw has come
And everybody is drunk
And dancing in the kitchen
And singing in the kitchen
Oh these is good times, good times
Good times
Oh children think about the
Good Times

By Lucille Clifton"

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

RACHEL SIMMS

Advice to Young People Today:

Listen to your parents; You must have an education and work as hard as you can in order to provide for the future of your family.

Rachel Simms was born on December 31, 1923 in Franklin Borough. She was one of 11 children born to Thomas and Mabel Simms. Her parents traveled from North Carolina working in Steel Mills of Virginia and Pennsylvania. They finally settled in Franklin Borough. This is where Rachel was born. After relocating from Woodvale to Prospect and Cambria City, the family purchased a home in Dale Borough. Because the family moved close to the end of the school year, Rachel and sister Clarissa walked from Dale to Garfield in order to complete their studies.

Rachel is the mother of 5 children; David, Kevin, Wendell, Michelle and Michael (died at 8 months old). There are 11 grands and 11 great grands.

One of Rachel's first jobs was to iron clothes for display in the windows of Bergs and The Joy Shop. These clothes were placed on the mannequins for display. She also worked as a waitress and set up person at the Melody Lounge and a part-time cook at the Elks and Frontier Clubs. Another job was that of an aide for Community Action where she served at youth functions. When her brother David was the Commander of the Post, Rachel served as President of Ladies Auxiliary of the American Legion, Post 989, District 26.

Rachel's fondest memories of family include having barbecues. She also loved to follow the softball games at the flats in Prospect. The Community Action Programs were also a favorite.

In her youth, the Simms family belonged to the First Born Church in Prospect. Rachel sang at church functions and taught Sunday School.

Rachel Simms gets great joy from the antics of her grandchildren and is uplifted by the smiles of her great grand childrens' activities. Rachel, the mother and grandmother is content and accepts change because it happens at all the time. She is grateful for being able to get around.

THOMAS E. SIMMS
FEBRUARY 6, 1923

Ode to our Elders

These are our fathers and mothers,
Grandparents, teachers and friends.....
These are the roots we go back to,
Where our foundation begins.
How many times they've inspired us,
Pointing our dreams to the sky!
These are the men and women who gave us wings.....
And the courage to fly!

Wonderful men and women of color,
Offspring of warriors and kings.....
What a rich birthright they bring us!
Oh, how their legacy sings!
Sharing the pride of our people,
Teaching what's right and what's wrong,
Rising to meet every challenge,
Keeping our character strong.....

People like you are the reason our people survive, succeed, and thrive.
Thank you for your strength, your courage and your example.

Author Unknown

Thomas Simms' father followed the jobs and the money. He found work in the Steel Mills of the North. With the desire to support his family, he traveled from North Carolina to Virginia and found work in a number of Pennsylvania cities until they reached Franklin.

While the family lived in Franklin Borough, Thomas was born on February 6, 1923. The Simms moved to different locations in Johnstown. Woodvale, Prospect, Cambria City and finally, the father purchased a home in Dale Borough. Tom graduated from Dale High School. During World War II, Thomas was drafted in the army and served in Japan. There he met and married, Teiko Suszek, who worked as a nurse at a hospital that he patrolled. She died February 3, 1988 on their 31st wedding anniversary.

They had 8 children; Susie, Thomas, Charles, Elizabeth, Anthony, John, Linda and Monica.

He served his Tour of Duty and re-enlisted. Tom had a career in the military that spanned WW II and the Korean War. For 11 years, he served as a military police serving in Japan, Germany and France. When he returned to Johnstown, Mr. Simms worked for a while in construction, also as a trolley driver for the traction company, for the Pennsylvania railroad and finally trained horses.

Outstanding Family Memories

One of Tom Simms more poignant memories occurred when the family lived in Prospect. They had a community garden on Moore Street. As a family, they carried bags of manure from the Circus Animals in Woodvale up over the trail of the steep hills of Prospect Area to Moore Street. He remembers the smell!

Outstanding Community Memories

There was a collective desire for survival all over the city. Black and white families walked through the woods picking fruit and berries. They canned them and had enough fruit, jam and jelly for the entire year.

During the sixties and the civil rights movement, after the police killing **of 16 year old Timothy Perkins**, Mr. Simms walked the streets trying to keep the peace.

Outstanding Religious Memories

Mr. Simms served the religious community. He first was a layman in the First Born Church of Prospect. He has served as deacon, minister, ordained elder and Evangelist. He has worked with Apostolic Churches in California and overseas in Ghana, on Indian Reservations in Arizona and Gypsy Camps in New York. Mr. Simms started two (2) church missions in Altoona and Johnstown.

At this time in his life, Tom Simms is grateful for living in a country where we are free to speak, vote and worship without reprisal. He is grateful for being self-sufficient and getting around on his own. Even though change occurs all the time, Mr. Simms is content.

What makes him laugh: The Civil Rights Movement! Thank You Lord, Thank You Lord! He is "Amazed" at how far it has come in his lifetime.

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

Tommy Simms

Favorite Song:

A Crown of Life

Favorite Bible Scripture:

Matthew 16:16
"Thou are the Christ"

Favorite Saying:

You Got That Right!

ALICE DOROTHY (MOORE) TAYLOR
MARCH 8, 1926

A Gift Of Love

Time is not measure by the years that you live
But by the deeds that you do and the joy that you give....
And from birthday to birthday, the good Lord above
Bestows on His children the gift of His Love.
Asking us only to share it with others.
By treating all people not as strangers but brothers....
And each day, as it comes, brings a new chance to each one
To live to the fullest, leaving nothing undone.
That would brighten the life or lighten the load.
Of some weary traveler lost on life's road.
So what does it matter how long we may live
If as long as we live, we unselfishly give.

"Helen Steiner Rice"

In Helen Steiner Rice's poem, a gift of love, she extols the virtue of performing good deeds and passing on God's love to others. A minister's daughter has been taught this from childhood. Alice Dorothy Moore qualifies as one that fits this category. As the eldest child of Rev. Benjamin and Clara Moore, "Dorothy" received biblical instruction since birth. Her duty has always been to be the role model for her siblings: fraternal twins: Geneva and William (deceased), sister Carrie (deceased) and little brother, Benjamin Jr. (deceased). Life in the Moore household reflected the times. If the men in the congregation had low paying jobs, the pastor did not get a decent salary. The Moore's learned to do with very little. Dorothy earned a little money scrubbing the floors and counters of Phil Albert's Store.

Dorothy attended the East Conemaugh School System. After the death of her father, she went to work to supplement the family income. At age 17, she went to stay with relatives in Baltimore, and worked as a file clerk in the Social Security Office.

Elder Thoughts and
Elder Wisdom

Alice Dorothy (Moore) Taylor

Favorite Song:

Jesus Keep Me Near The Cross

Favorite Bible Scripture:

Psalm 91

Advice to Young People Today:

"You Need the Lord In Your Life; You Need to Attend a Bible Teaching Church.".

On August 9, 1946, Dorothy married the love of her life, James Leroy Taylor. The couple lived in Conemaugh, later moved to Bedford Street and finally moved to the Homes in Prospect where the couple raised their 6 children. They are Gregory, James, Courtney (deceased) Deborah (deceased), Rita, Frank and Mindy. She is proud of her 11 grandchildren, 30 great grandchildren and 2 great-great grandchildren. While husband James worked in the mills, Dorothy supplemented the family income by doing housework in the city. After all the children had graduated, Dorothy received her GED. For 15 years Dorothy cleaned offices at U.S. Steel. When she retired in 1991, she sought and received employment with the Foster Grandparents Program, retiring the second time, at Age 80. For Dorothy, this was one of the most rewarding and challenging programs of her career.

One of the most devastating moments a mother faces is the death of her child. Alice Dorothy Taylor suffered such an event in 2011 when the sudden death of her oldest daughter, Debbie and grandson occurred on the same day! Although the pain of that experience can never be erased, she remembers the "Good Times," especially the family reunion held in Portage.

Dorothy has vivid memories of two major floods in Johnstown. During the 1936 flood, she was 10 years old. The Moore family sought refuge at Mrs. Frances Johnson's house on First Street in Conemaugh. They later moved to Lazo's Grove until the waters receded. In 1977, the Taylors watched the devastation that occurred from their front porch. As the daughter of a preacher, Dorothy believed that her life was like a microscope, everything that she did was under scrutiny, yet much of her fondest memories deal with the church. She loved the annual church picnics. All the Black Churches in Johnstown banned together for one day and celebrated. The earliest ones were held in Rosedale. Later they moved to Lakemont Park. Most seniors of that period still speak fondly of those gatherings.

Alice Dorothy Taylor looks back on her life and is satisfied with the way it turned out. She expressed gratitude for "all that God has done for her."

GERSIELEE MICKENS THOMPSON
AUGUST 16, 1925

In the children's book, Gussie, The Giving Goose, Karen Thompson Stewart writes about the neighborhood Do "Gooder", a goose named Gussie, who takes care of the other animals in the neighborhood during a flu epidemic. Each day Gussie encounters numerous neighbors in the barnyard and invites them along. These busy bodies refuse to help and continue their own tasks. Eventually, Gussie gets the flu. The story has a redemptive ending, because Gussie's neighbors come to her rescue. They bring baskets of soup, clean her house and apologize for not helping her. The premise of the book seems to describe the neighborhood where the author was reared. The place where her mother Gersielee Mickens Thompson received her values!

Gersielee Mickens was born to Marion and Hannah Mickens on August 16, 1925. She was raised in Conemaugh, Pa and attended the East Conemaugh School System. Gersielee and late husband, Matthew raised their children in East Conemaugh until necessity dictated they relocate to Coopersdale. The landlord was moving back in the current house and with the growth of their loving family it was beneficial to move into a 5-bedroom apartment.

She has been blessed with ten (10) children; Hannah, Geraldine, Tiajuana (deceased), Matthew, Tommy, Karen, Melinda, Edward, Gregory and Bernadine. She also has two (2) stepsons; Eddie Chaney and Sonny. Her multi-talented offspring include an educator, minister, author, artist and many other talents. They have blessed her with 43 grandchildren. Her children have brought her great joy!

One of Gersielee's earliest jobs was working in the kitchen at Woolworths. Later in life, she was hired as a janitor for Penelec, and retired after 20 years of service.

As a young woman, Gersielee shared her loving and caring ways throughout the community thru her social involvement. She played short stop on the ladies softball team, and was active in various social clubs, such as the Corvettes, Elks, Coke Plant Club and the Eastern Stars.

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

Gersielee Mickens Thompson

Favorite Songs:

Precious Lord (Religious)

Family Reunion (Secular)

Favorite Bible Scripture:

Psalm 23

Advice to Young People Today:

Seek the Lord. Get an education in order to better yourself.

Gersielee is an active member of the Mt. Sinai Institutional Baptist Church serving in the Mission Ministry. For many years, she was an usher and sang in the choir. One of her most memorable moments occurred when she took her daughters, Melinda and Karen to church. Her cousin Bertha Hill was with her at the time. Half way there, she realized that both girls had their shoes on the wrong feet and she (Gersielee) had on house slippers!

DEACON EARL DENNIS WILLIAMS
DECEMBER 1, 1925

On any given summer day, you might see Earl Williams tending his garden; full of pole beans, cabbage, collards, onions and tomatoes. Or he might be painting, nailing and sweeping as he prepares his second house for occupancy. On Sundays, he attends services at the Mt. Sinai Institutional Baptist Church, where he serves as Emeritus Deacon. One thing for sure - he is always busy!

Born on December 1, 1925, Earl is the eldest of (4) children to Tom and Eva Williams. He attended the former Franklin Borough School completing the tenth grade. After he left school, Earl joined the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) and located to Center County. From 1940 to 1942, he was a senior cook. In 1942 the program was disbanded and Earl was discharged. He was hired by Bethlehem Steel as laborer in the Coke Plant.

In March 1944, he was drafted into the Navy, serving in Company 581, where he held the rank of Seaman First Class. Seaman Earl Williams, tour of duty included a stay in New Jersey loading ammunition on board ships destined for Europe. From there he was sent to Guam, where his duties included guarding Japanese prisoners of war. [According to Earl, the prisoners were all college students who had been educated in the United States]! While overseas, Seaman Williams met up with a number of Johnstown home boys; Alfonso Embry, Ted Woods, Calvin Burk and James Andrews. Finally in May 1946, Earl was discharged and returned home.

During his tour of duty, Earl Williams was plagued by severe illness. It began with an infection in his tonsils that escalated into severe infection. As a result, Earl has spent months in the hospital. This illness continues to take its toll on his health today.

In 1946, Earl returned to Bethlehem Steel. His work history was sporadic due to health concerns. He moved to Buffalo, NY for 4 years, returned to Johnstown and worked in Wire Mill. At various times in his work career, Mr. Williams had to vacate his job. One of the last formal positions that he held was with PennDot, Pennsylvania

Department of Transportation. Once again, Earl became ill and had to leave that position. In 1970's, he became self-employed. He purchased a truck and used it to haul coal.

Later he broaden his skills to construction work. Deacon Williams boasts that he could build and repair anything!

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

Deacon Earl Dennis Williams

Favorite Song:

Peace In the Valley

Favorite Bible Scripture:

Matthew 5; Verses 3-11
The Beatitudes

Favorite Saying:

If I can't do any good,
I won't do any harm"
From his grandfather, John Anthony.

Opinions on the Election of President Obama:

I never thought a black man would be elected as President in my lifetime. He is God sent. I wrote to President Obama and received an answer from him. And yes, I will vote for him again!

His first marriage with Betty Bailey was short lived. In 1968, he married Willa Mae Herring. Because they had no children of their own, they began to participate in the Cambria County Foster Care Program. Down through the years, Mr. and Mrs. Williams opened up their home to 48 foster children. Eventually they adopted 5; Earl Jr., Melisa, Dewayne, Thomas and Trish. After the adoption hearing one of the children said, "Thank you Jesus, we are going home!" There are 7 living grandchildren, one is deceased.

Deacon Williams' most memorable moments occurred during the 1936 flood. When the family heard that the dam burst, they grabbed a mattress and headed for the hills above Franklin Borough! He also speaks with reverence about his mother, Eva. She never ate supper with the family because she wanted to make sure that her children had enough to eat before she sat down to her meal. Another reflection concerned the Community Action program. Some early members of the board were Paul D. Bennett, Ethel Coleman and Rev. Andrew Tilly. Deacon Williams praised their efforts for supplying the Black Community with information about state and federal programs available to those with low incomes

In 1947, Earl Williams joined the Mt. Sinai Institutional Baptist Church. His grandfather was one of the founding members of the institution. He is most grateful for his ordination as a Deacon. "When they gave me my ordination prayer, I thought my feet would burn through my shoes!

Deacon Williams also expresses gratitude for being able to open his home to 48 foster children and adopt 5 of them. According to him, "Those kids made my home "HOME!"

CHARLENE WILSON
AUGUST 12, 1954

Charlene Wilson is one of 7 children born to Charlie and Pearlie Barber Wilson of North Point, Alabama. The Wilson's owned a large farm with 7 houses on the property. Unlike the typical southern farmers, their share croppers were white.

After graduating from Tuscaloosa County Training School, Charlene attended Stillman Institute for one year. She majored in Home Economics. While in high school, Charlene attended a Paul Robeson concert. Even though the theater was segregated, (Blacks had to sit in the back), Charlene described Robeson's performance as "amazing!"

In 1947 Charlene came to Johnstown with a brother and other relatives. They lived with Aunt Pauline in Prospect. As a permanent member of the prospect Community, Charlene has raised her 4 children, Stephen, Dyrthe, David and Jeffery. She is a grandmother of 3 and a great grandmother of 6.

Charlene's work history began when she was hired to do "Day Work" for professional families in Johnstown. She also worked in "Shoe World" and finally in 1970 was hired as a Teacher's Aide for the Johnstown School District. Charlene retired after 36 years. While in that position Charlene served as a building representative for aids and maintenance workers. She attended PSEA and NEA Conventions.

Outstanding Family Memories

Charlene enjoyed many family activities; she traveled to reunions and other events in Alabama and Cleveland, Ohio.

Brother Curtis became a professor of African American Studies at Cleveland State University. He has been a speaker for the local NAACP Unit as well as for the Pleasant Hill Baptist Church MLK celebration.

She is proud that her children have taken an active part in the church.

Elder Thoughts and Elder Wisdom

CHARLENE WILSON

Favorite Song:

His Eye Is On The Sparrow

Favorite Bible Scripture:

Psalm 23 and Psalm 27

Advice to Young People Today:

Study in school and learn to obey the rules. Listen to your parents. Think about wanting to advance yourself as you go along in life. Stay in church. Learn to respect people!

Outstanding Community Memories

Charlene is a strong community activist. As a result she has served in many capacities: Community Action Board, Boy Scout Leader, 12th Ward Committee member; NAACP State Convention Delegate, Education Committee, PTA Westwood and Prospect Citizens Committee in 2010, the NAACP presented her with the MLK Jr. Award for a lifetime of civil rights work.

Church Work

President of the Missionary Ministry, Vacation Bible School, Nurse's Corp. President E.S.P. Ministry

Charlene expresses gratitude for having a good mind, a supportive family and successes that the family has accomplished.

One of the lighter moments in Charlene's life occurred when her cousin lost her false teeth at a barbecue. Even though they looked everywhere, even in the garbage, the teeth were never found!

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2002-2009

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LORENE EDWARDS
LEAH (PRIDGEN) FLOYD
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O'NEIL (JOY) HOLMES
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IDA C. PRIDGEN
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JOSEPHINE (POPE) RICHARDSON
ISABEL ROBINSON
ETHEL MAE (MC NAIR) SABIR
MAGGIE (GRANT) SEGARS
WILMER J. SEGARS
CHARLES SIMON
VIOLA (WILLIAMS) SMITH
KATHLEEN (BROWN) STEWART
EDGAR THOMAS
MARY E. THOMAS
MARY ELIZABETH TROUTMAN
ELIZABETH TULLIS
JOHN TULLIS, JR.
ANNIE BELL (FARRIOR) TWYMAN
ALBERT W. VAUGHN
JOE WALLS
RUTH (WALTON) WHITEHEAD
ELIZABETH WILLIAMS
ROSE (GETHERS) WILLIAMS
ALVENA WRIGHT
MELDA YATES

This Booklet was compiled by:

The Johnstown Branch NAACP

Heritage Committee

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Co-Chairperson _____ **Yvonne Watkins**

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Dorothy Thomas

President of Johnstown Branch NAACP _____ **Alan Cashaw**

"LIFT ♫ EVERY ♫ VOICE ♫ and Sing"

VERSE 1:

♫ *Lift every voice and sing Till earth and heaven ring,*
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise High as the listening skies
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.

Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us.
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on till victory is won.

♫ *VERSE 2:*
Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn has died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?

We have come over a way that with tears have been watered,
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past, Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

♫

VERSE 3:
God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who has by Thy might, Led us into the light.
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.

Lest our feet stray from the places, Our God, where we met Thee;
Lest, our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand, May we forever stand.
True to our GOD, True to our native land.

WE'VE COME THIS FAR BY FAITH

REFRAIN:

We've come this far by faith, Leaning on the Lord.
Trusting in his Holy Word, He's never failed me yet.

Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, Oh, Can't turn around,
We've come this far by faith.

Verse 1

Don't be discouraged, When troubles in your life,
He'll bear your burdens, And move all misery and strife.
That why we've.....

Verse 2

Just the other day, I heard someone say, He didn't believe in God's Word.
But I can truly say that God has made a way, And he has never failed me yet.
That's why we've . . .

YOUR GRACE AND MERCY

YOUR GRACE AND MERCY, BROUGHT ME THROUGH,
I'M LIVING THIS MOMENT BECAUSE OF YOU.
I WANT TO THANK YOU, AND PRAISE YOU TOO.
YOUR GRACE AND MERCY-- BROUGHT ME THROUGH.