



Shirley Lee Forbes Johnson

October 9, 1936 - April 18, 2025

IN MEMORY OF:

Shirley Lee Forbes Johnson

Serving Location:

CRAIN FUNERAL HOME – CAIRO
4815 Sycamore Street, Cairo, Illinois

Shirley Lee Forbes Johnson was born on October 9, 1936, to Cleveland and Beatrice Forbes in Mound City, Illinois.

The seventh of nine children, Shirley grew up in a household where Christian Faith, love of family, and a strong work ethic were foundational. From an early age, she learned the values of diligence, service, and financial stewardship while helping in the family business, Forbes Grocery. Her upbringing instilled in her a deep love for god and family-values she would carry throughout her life.

She attended First Free Will Baptist Church in her youth and later became a devoted member of Resurrection Lutheran Church in Chicago, where she faithfully served for over 50 years, including her committed work with the

resurrection credit union.

Shirley's academic path reflected her brilliance and determination. She graduated as valedictorian from Lovejoy High School in 1954, where she also captained the cheerleading team. She went on to earn her Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from Southern Illinois University in 1958 and became a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, inc. In the fall of 1956; Delta Beta Chapter. She served as the chapter's Basileus. Her thirst for knowledge continued at Chicago State University, where she earned two Master's Degrees one in Special Education and another in Educational Administration.

In 1956, Shirley met the love of her life, Robert. Their union blossomed into 61 years of marriage built on mutual respect, faith, and joy. Together, they raised three daughters, Sharon, Sue, and Dana. Shirley was the heart of their home an example of a devoted wife and mother who taught her children the value of life, hard work, and faith. Her life was a masterclass in strength, grace, and unwavering commitment to family.

Shirley's career in education began at Oakenwald Elementary School and spanned four decades in the Chicago Public Schools. Her passion for serving diverse learners led to her being recognized for excellence in special education. She retired as Assistant principal of Jackie Robinson Elementary School in 2002, however, her dedication did not wane. She came out of retirement to lead Resurrection Lutheran Day School as principal for five more years, continuing to shape young lives with care and purpose.

In 1968, Shirley and Robert built their first family home in Chicago. Later, in 1991, they built another warm and welcoming home in Homewood, Illinois. These spaces were more than just residences-they were sanctuaries filled with tradition, laughter, and love. Shirley poured herself into nurturing her

children and grandchildren, creating a legacy grounded in Christian principles, strength of character, and familial devotion.

She also treasured gardening in her immense backyard, working tirelessly, but lovingly, to nurture seedlings into beautiful blossoms. After Robert's untimely death, she kept her mind sharp by managing their real-estate.

Retirement brought new joys. Shirley became an avid bowler, participating in the Julian Bowlers League and later the Castaway Senior League. She mentored as a tops (take off pounds sensibly) member, stayed active with the Jackie Robinson Retired Teachers Group, and enjoyed gardening, traveling, line dancing, bingo, and-most of all-spending precious time with her family. She seldom missed a graduation, concert, sporting event, or school play. Her presence was a constant source of encouragement and pride.

Before meals, Shirley would often recite Matthew 11:28: "come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and i will give you rest." her faith was a guiding light, and on April 18th, she peacefully laid down her earthly burdens and entered into eternal rest.

Shirley leaves behind a legacy of love, strength, and unwavering faith. Her daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren will carry forward her values and quiet spirit. She is survived by her daughters: Sharon (Lewis) Simpkins of Homewood, IL, Sue (Lester) Barclay of Chicago, IL, and Dana Johnson-Maisonneuve of Flossmoor, IL: nine grandchildren, who affectionately called her Marmee, Grandma Shirley, and Mamoo: Christopher simpkins of Dallas, TX, Shalon Johnson-Eggleston of Homewood, IL, Sean Johnson-Eggleston of Dallas TX, Kayin (Lauren) Barclay of Atlanta, GA, Kia Barclay of St. Louis, me, Dionne Gamble of Flossmoor, IL, Kara Barclay of Atlanta, GA, Devin Gamble of Flossmoor, IL, and Dale Gamble of Flossmoor,

IL; eleven great-grandchildren: Zaqueri Love of Denver, CO, Zaraya Berry of Ashford, VA, Ziayre Berry of Dallas, TX, Tyler Johnson-Eggleston of Annapolis, MD. Zymora Dean of Ashford, VA, Saje Eggleston-Harris of Homewood, IL, Tristan Johnson-Eggleston of Annapolis, MD, Taylor Johnson-Eggleston of Annapolis, MD, Sethe Eggleston-Smith of Homewood, IL, and Lily Barclay of Atlanta, GA: And her beloved sister: Sylvia Forbes Long of Chicago, IL., and a host of nieces, nephews and friends.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Robert, her parents, Cleveland and Beatrice Forbes, and her siblings, Abner Forbes, James Lawrence Forbes, Cleveland Forbes, Jr., Almena Beatrice English, Sara Mae Johnson, Wilma Josephine Mckinney, Violet Marie King, and Mary Ella Forbes, as well as a grandchild: Danyail Berry.

Interment was held at Green Lawn Memorial Gardens in Villa Ridge, Illinois.

Crain Funeral Home in Cairo is in charge of arrangements.

Cemetery Details

Green Lawn Memorial Gardens

Old US 51
Villa Ridge, IL 62996