



Velma L. Waller-Johnson

September 25, 2013

Velma Louise Waller Johnson passed away suddenly on September 25, 2013, leaving behind her loving husband, Paul, and a remarkable life. She was 81 years old. Velma was a faithful and devoted wife who enjoyed life and her family. She was born on October 9, 1931 in Brownsville, Tennessee to the late Willie Thomas and Mary Pender Waller. Velma was the fourth of eight children to grow up in this close knit, farming community in western Tennessee. Her parents taught their children the value of hard work on the farm and hard work at school, and Velma lived up to their expectations of her. Willie Waller also made it a practice to give all his children a nickname. Velma was called “Weeze” short for her middle name, and the nickname stuck with her until she left home to pursue her dreams. As a young girl, she had high hopes for herself at a time when racial prejudice in the south held blacks back from fulfilling their potential. However, Velma was a smart, serious student who never lost her focus.

She attended Lester Grammar School for her early education, and in the late 1940s, she graduated from Haywood County Training School, later renamed Carver High School. Her goals of a bright future started to materialize when she left Brownsville to attend college at A and I State University in Nashville, now known as Tennessee State University. There, she majored in home economics and pledged Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. By then, Velma had blossomed into a natural beauty, with a winning personality, and the style and grace that did not go unnoticed. She was elected Ms. A and I University from

1952 to 1953 and posed for a picture as homecoming queen in a gown she handmade herself. After graduation, Velma taught for two years in Alamo, Tennessee where on weekends her brothers had to pick her up and drive her home to Brownsville because, back then, young ladies required chaperones and did not live alone.

At a time when young women were getting married and starting families, Velma took a nontraditional route, looking for a chance to nurture her independent spirit. She set her sights on a job thousands of miles away from home in Paris, France, where she taught English for two years on an American military base. After that experience, Velma never looked back south except for occasional visits to see her family. She settled in New York City near her sister, Cleo, becoming part of the great migration north as blacks moved from the south to enjoy a freedom that was inaccessible to them in the south. Velma and Cleo often encouraged family members to follow the path that led to better opportunities for blacks in the north, and many of them did. Velma continued her teaching career in the New York City school system and later earned her master's degree in counseling at New York University. Along the way, she developed into a savvy business woman, and in partnership with her sister, Cleo, owned a bed and breakfast on Martha's Vineyard.

Velma enjoyed her single life and turned down many marriage proposals until she met Paul Johnson, a civil engineer, in New York City. The couple eloped while vacationing in Hawaii in 1986, and they were happily married for 27 years. She retired after a distinguished career with the New York City Board of Education as a guidance counselor at William O'Shea Junior High School. In addition to her parents, Velma is preceded in death by several siblings, John Adam, Willie Jr. and Cleopatra "Cleo" Kinney. She leaves behind her husband, Paul, four siblings, Janice Robertson, Gwen Chambers, Kenneth Waller and Dwight Waller and a host of other relatives and friends. Although Velma never had children of her own, she was a surrogate mother to Paul's children Paul Jr. and Linda Susan Jackson and to a list of nieces and nephews that include: Patrick, Dwaine, Joel, Dwight Jr., Sherry, Elizabeth,

Chloe, Hollye Chambers, Lisa Robertson Jones and Keith Robertson. She will be deeply missed by all who loved her.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that memorial donations in Velma's name be made to:

The Regional Cancer Center C/O Holy Name Medical Center, 718 Teaneck Road, Teaneck, NJ 07666

Cemetery Details

George Washington Memorial Park

234 Paramus Road
Paramus, NJ 07652

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT 2. 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM (ET)

Teaneck
789 Teaneck Road
Teaneck, NJ 07666
(201) 836-0202
info@volkleber.com
<https://www.volkleber.com>

Service

OCT 3. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Teaneck
789 Teaneck Road
Teaneck, NJ 07666
(201) 836-0202
info@volkleber.com
<https://www.volkleber.com>

Tribute Wall



“ Volk Leber Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of
Velma L. Waller-Johnson



Volk Leber Funeral Home - September 25, 2013 at 12:00 AM



“ Velma L. Waller-Johnson

October 08, 2023 at 09:59 PM



“ Velma L. Waller-Johnson

October 08, 2023 at 06:27 PM



“ Velma L. Waller-Johnson

August 30, 2022 at 02:48 PM



“ Ken, Dwight, Janice and Gwen,
I am so sorry to hear of Velma's passing. As a kid I remember her
kindness and beauty. In growing up your mother and my mother
were as close as could be. You all were the cousins we cherished
the most. Love you All, Fuzzy Geraldus Bond

Geraldus Bond - September 30, 2013 at 12:28 PM