



Willie Mae (Hicks) Lester

February 15, 1939 - January 5, 2021

UTICA - Willie Mae (Hicks) Lester, age 81, went home to the Lord on Tuesday, January 5, 2021 where she was welcomed by her mother, sister, daughter, and all who preceded her.

Born in Savannah, Georgia on February 15, 1939, Willie Mae was the daughter of the late Jim "Jimmy" and Elma Hicks. She was raised on the family farm in Savannah with her siblings and family until she was 19 years old and moved first to Boston, Massachusetts and then to Utica. During her marriage to Willie "Carl" Lester, Sr., their hearts were never far apart from each other, up until Carl's dying day.

Willie Mae worked as a presser at Ablove's Linen Supply Company and concurrently at Tri-State Industrial Laundries. She was a hardworking woman, and everything she did, she did for her family. Her humble heart came from her mom, and just like her mother, she was respectful and hospitable. A remarkable mother, she passed down the old-time values and wisdom of her years to her children who still embrace those life lessons to this day. She lived a simple life and often tenderly expressed tough love to keep everyone in line. She was close to her kids and wanted them to have productive lives and be good people. She was also a good Christian and believed in God. Everyone in her family went to church on Sunday morning and shared Sunday supper. She prayed for her children every day and raised and nurtured many kids who needed her, and she cared for them. She made them part of the family and everybody affectionately called her Mom or Grandma. Willie Mae and her

legacy will never be forgotten. She was an example of what one woman could accomplish in this world. She was “like Moses” — she had an open heart and an open door to those in need. She never collected assistance; she worked to provide for her family, and when times were tough, they lived from hand to mouth. She was a great cook and could improvise to make a hearty meal from anything on hand, and with her baking skills she could make any kind of pie. She was an amazing, strong woman who lived her life for others.

Back in the day, she loved camping, and after working all week, she would rest a bit on Friday, get everybody up bright and early, and as many as could fit in the station wagon, she and the kids would head up to the Thousand Islands, namely Cranberry Creek. They would all fish and could catch as much as 3-4 coolers full that she could fix 100 different ways, and nothing was better than that. Another family venture was berry picking and the fruits of her labor were strawberry or blackberry pies! She earned the title of “Grandma Puzzle Queen” because she would mix up the 5,000 pieces of a jigsaw puzzle of no particular theme and begin by putting the border pieces together then filling in the middle. When it was complete, she glued the back, and finally framed it with black tape. She completed these labors of love not only for her home, but also for others. Her puzzles still stand proud on the walls that resound with her love. Willie Mae was a mother to 8 boys, a girl, and a host of other children who found their way to her for the blessings she had to offer. She raised her family, and in return, as she grew older, they took care of her with love, respect, and devotion.

As she was aging, she had to deal with the sorrow of losing her baby sister, Rosalee. They were two peas-in-a-pod and Willie Mae became her mentor, especially near the end. She prayed for Rosalee, talked spiritually with her, and now, they are having fun, ...together again reunited in heaven.

Although she was an outgoing woman throughout her life, she endured health problems that prevented her from participating in so many of the activities she once loved to do. She was of a generation that lived through tough times, but the children never knew of her struggles. She was tenacious, and she never

gave up. That's who she was. She will be missed for her laughter, memories, and untold acts of kindness, ...known only to the Lord.

Willie Mae is survived by her children, Tony Ponders, Charles Jackson, Carl Lester Jr., Phillip Lester, James Lester, and Jerome Lester; and the memories of her daughter Carleen Lester who passed on September 9, 2000, and her son Freddy Lester who also passed. She will be remembered by a great number of grandchildren who were loved by her, especially Christina Lester, Nikita Lester, and Romell Ponders who were raised by their grandma and remained with her until her passing; a host of great-grandchildren including those she raised including James, Catyana, Niashia, and the late Zikeya who passed in 2016; and her great-great-grandchildren. She also leaves her sister, Evelyn Mathis; brothers and sister-in-law, Jimmy Hicks, Elmer Hicks, Benny Lee Hicks, and Lester and Gail Hicks; a host of nieces, nephews, great-nieces, great-nephews, and cousins. She had friendships in her lifetime that were so meaningful, but sadly, she outlived most of them. She was preceded by her siblings and their loves, Rosalee and George, Katie Hicks, and Leon Hicks. All of them will be waiting on her in heaven. She was predeceased on December 14, 2020 by her great-grandson Jah'zeir Johnson who will be in peace in knowing his grandma will be with him again.

The family is grateful to Carl Jr. who was his mother's caretaker and did so much with tender touches. She changed his life and chose to make a home with his mom. Also, Princess Lindsey, her granddaughter aided her family in many ways; Baby Doll, her niece who encouraged her to endure the days with hope; and Derrick George who was always a phone call away and showed compassion anytime this family needed him.

Anyone who wishes to pay their respects to Willie Mae may call on Saturday afternoon, January 16, 2021 from 2-4 at the Eannace Funeral Home, Inc., 932 South St., corner of Hammond Ave. Social distancing, registration for contact tracing, and a mask covering your nose and mouth will be required.

During this time of social distancing that we are all experiencing, please take a

moment to connect with Willie Mae's family through the "Memories" section of her obituary. Our prayers go out to all as a sign of our continued support.

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 16. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Eannace Funeral Home, Inc.
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