



Mrs. Sarah Thomas

February 6, 1931 - July 2, 2022

Mrs. Sarah Thomas, 91, of Salem, AL passed away Saturday, July 2, 2022, at her home. The funeral service for Mrs. Thomas will be held at 11 am (CST) Saturday, July 8, 2022, at Greater Peace Missionary Baptist Church in Opelika, AL with interment in Garden Hills Cemetery. Her remains will lie in state at the church one hour prior to the service. Rev. Clifford E. Jones will officiate. Public viewing and a family hour will be held Friday from 4-6 pm (CST) at Peterson & Williams Funeral Home. Masks are required.

Mrs. Thomas was a devoted member of Pleasant View Baptist Church in Salem. Her services included President of the Usher Board and Deacon Wives and Chairperson of the Sick and Shut-in Ministry.

Mrs. Thomas was a 1951 graduate of East Street High School in Opelika, AL and went on to attend Tuskegee University, Auburn University, and The University of Alabama. Upon the passing of her son, Todd Phillip Franklin Thomas, from sickle cell disease, Mrs. Thomas became a torchbearer for education on and treatment for the condition. She received extensive training from Grady and Emory Hospitals in Atlanta, GA. Through her advocacy, the

first sickle cell program in Alabama was established, and then Governor George C. Wallace declared February 1975 as "State Sickle Cell Month." Alabama governors still honor this tribute yearly, and newborns are screened at all hospitals statewide because of Mrs. Thomas's work.

Mrs. Thomas is preceded in death by her beloved husband, Benny Thomas Jr.; son, Todd Phillip Thomas; stepsons, James Sanford and Benny Thomas III; loving parents, Arthur Ward Sr. and Maggie Mae Ward; sister, Mary Cochran; and four brothers, Arthur Ward Jr, Johnny Ward, Bobby Ward, and Harry Ward.

Her life and legacy will be cherished by her devoted sons, Gregory A. Thomas of Salem, AL and Ronald M. (Sherrie) Thomas of Opelika AL; a devoted daughter, Maggie L. Thomas of Auburn, AL; grandchildren, Ronica T. Thomas of Montgomery, AL, Meagan D. (Vincent) Andrews of Birmingham, AL and Ronald M. Thomas Jr. of Opelika, AL; one step daughter-in-law, Deborah Sanford; step grandchildren, Dr. Vytoris Sandord-Maddox (Gregory) of Fort Mitchell, AL, Dimesha Sanford and Jitillian Sanford, both of Smiths, AL; three sisters, Gladys Freelon of Chicago, IL, A. Frances Kimber of Phenix City, AL, and Joyce Upshaw of Salem, AL; four sisters-in- law, Juanita Martin of Compton, CA, Annie Mae Graham and Helen Thomas both, of Salem, AL, and Jean Ward of Cortland, NY. She is also survived by nieces, nephews, family, and friends.

Cemetery Details

Garden Hills Cemetery

1218 Frederick Road
Opelika, AL 36801

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 8. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (CT)

Peterson and Williams Funeral Home
1016 McCoy Street
Opelika, AL 36801
(334) 745-6473
pw1016mccoy@hotmail.com

Service

JUL 9. 11:00 AM (CT)

Greater Peace Missionary Baptist Church
650 Jeter Avenue
Opelika, AL 36801
<http://www.greaterpeacechurch.org/>

Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Sarah Thomas*

January 29, 2023 at 11:13 AM



“ *Maggie*

I am so sorry. I remember working for your Mom on a summer program. I learned about Sickle Cell Anemia from her. She was a beautiful and passionate woman.

*Annie Jefferson Burton -
SSHS Class of 1980*

Annie Burton - July 24, 2022 at 10:29 PM



“ *Maggie I am so sorry for your loss! I wish I had known. I loved Sarah!*

Viola Colquitt - July 09, 2022 at 10:12 PM



“ *My condolences to the family*



John baker - July 09, 2022 at 07:30 AM

MA

“ *My Heartstring, My Beautiful Grandmother:*

I thank God for your life. The world is a better place because of your contribution. I thank God for our bond and for every lesson you taught me. You were exemplary. Legendary! I find peace knowing you are with God. I also find peace knowing your life, love, and legacy will be remembered forever. I love you eternally. 🥹🙏💔🕊️🥺



Meagan Andrews - July 08, 2022 at 04:05 PM

GS

“ *Rest in Paradise Auntie'. I will forever remember that beautiful smile and the gracious laughter. Condolences for the family. Prayers of comfort has been and will continue to be prayed. Love you all*
Gwendolyn Sanks & Family



Gwendolyn Sanks - July 08, 2022 at 10:32 AM



“ *Rainbow Of Remembrance Spray was purchased for the family of Mrs. Sarah Thomas.*



July 07, 2022 at 10:07 PM

“ Maggie Thomas and Family,

Ms. Rita and I regret that we are not able to join you today for the celebration of life for Sarah Thomas. I would like to offer these as my remarks to you the family and those in attendance at the service.

Everyone is here today for a reason. Sarah Thomas was someone who was important to us in one way or another. What happens today is important, we're supporting Maggie and the family as we and they say goodbye to a mother, grandmother, aunt, or friend. We all need to leave today with a purpose. That purpose is to keep supporting this family after today. The pain will be there for the family for a long time. They will need us to be there to listen, comfort, and occasionally kick them in the butt. The bottom line is they need us because they face many ups and downs. A grief counselor says the right question is 'How are you doing TODAY', not how you are doing. The reason for this is that dealing with grief is a daily battle with each day making you stronger to deal with tomorrow.

A Swiss philosopher offers this insight. Life can only be understood backward, but it must be lived forward. Today we look backward at a life well-lived. Hopefully, that will be said about each of us.

Unlike many of you, I did not get to interact with Sarah Thomas on a regular basis. We met occasionally at social events in Tuskegee. She would call Maggie at work and after they had taken care of their business, she'd ask to speak with me.

We would talk about whatever was on her mind, but it would always come back to Maggie and how much she appreciated all that her daughter was doing for her. This was a woman of great character, who passed that trait to her daughter.

If there was an issue at work with her mother, my answer to Maggie was "family first". I'd get a thank you from Maggie and somewhere along I'd have another conversation with 'mom' who would express her appreciation for Maggie being there for her.

As we move forward let's remember the smile, devoted person, and

friend to all. Let's leave here today with a purpose to develop new and deeper relationships. That is what Sarah Thomas would want. I would like to conclude with a poem written by John Gillespie Magee, Jr., an American pilot who flew in combat with the Royal Canadian Air Force in WWII. Portions of this poem appear on the headstones of many interred in Arlington National Cemetery, particularly aviators and astronauts.

High Flight

By John Gillespie Magee, Jr.

*"Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth of sun-split
clouds -
and done a hundred things You have not dreamed of -
wheeled and soared and swung high in the sunlit silence.
Hovering there I've chased the shouting wind along
and flung my eager craft through footless halls of air.
"Up, up the long delirious burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace,
where never lark, or even eagle, flew;
and, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
the high untrespassed sanctity of space,
put out my hand and touched the face of God."*

Sarah L. Thomas is touching the face of God. Like all of you, I will miss her, I salute her for a life well-lived.

Leon Johnson

Brigadier General, US Air Force (ret)

JJ

“ *Jerry L. Jackson lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Sarah Thomas*



Jerry L. Jackson - July 07, 2022 at 04:14 PM

MC

“ *Mary Payne Charlot lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Sarah Thomas*



Mary Payne Charlot - July 06, 2022 at 08:21 PM

HF

Hattie Hicks Floyd sending my condolences and prayers

Hattie Hicks Floyd - July 09, 2022 at 01:01 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Mrs. Sarah Thomas.*



July 06, 2022 at 05:02 PM

LF

“ *Larry Fraizer lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Sarah Thomas*



Larry Fraizer - July 06, 2022 at 12:57 PM

MT

“ *Oh woman of faith ; great is thy faithfulness- thanks for all the memories and starting the first sickle cell program in the state of Alabama - we went numerous places spreading the Sickle Cell (gospel) -teaching/learning -thanks for over 40 dedicated years of service- It is well with your soul- Melton Torbert and family*

melton torbert - July 04, 2022 at 02:50 PM

BW

Mrs.Sarah Was A Great Person I Remember Her From Head Start About (50) Years Ago. She Made Sure The Children Was Eating Healthy.A Very Very Sweet Person With That Beauty Smile.She Will Be Missed.We Love You Sarah.❤

Bettye J Williams - July 06, 2022 at 11:03 PM