



Mrs. Joyce Brown Harris

September 24, 1941 - June 5, 2025

Joyce Brown Harris was born on September 24, 1941, in Blackstone, VA to the late William A. Brown, Sr. and Florence D. Brown. She was reared in Petersburg, VA, where her life was centered around the Girl Scouts, St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, and Peabody High School. As a high school senior in the segregated south, Joyce wanted to attend the International Girl Scout Roundup to be held in Colorado Springs, CO (approx. 10,000 girls from 18 countries), but a white troop was selected. Undaunted, she applied for, and won, a position as an aide to the director of the conference becoming the first black from eastern Virginia to attend. Joyce's illustrious high school career included drama, dance, being first chair saxophone in the band, and being named Valedictorian upon graduation in 1959.

Joyce grew up with her brother Willam A. Brown, Jr. and a special group of friends who later named themselves Friends of the Fifties. The group remained close and had reunions throughout her life. After graduation, Joyce attended Howard University in Washington, DC where, as a member of the Honor's Program, she majored in mathematics and minored in physics and astronomy. At Howard she served as President of the Canterbury Club and Commander of Angel Flight (AFROTC Auxiliary). She was chosen as the 1963 May Queen and the 1963 Howard Woman of the Year. Joyce pledged Alpha Chapter of her beloved Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., along with 41 other young women (Ever Ready 42) and served as the 50th Alpha Chapter

President. In this role, she had the honor of being in the company of JFK , Lyndon Johnson, Lady Bird Johnson, Supreme Court Justice Douglas, and 11 of the sorority's 22 founders. Joyce and her line sisters remained close throughout her life.

After graduating with a B.S. in Mathematics in 1963, Joyce was recruited and became the first black woman hired by IBM Corporation in the Washington, DC area. As a Systems Engineer Trainee, she began her career in Washington in IBM's Navy Program and subsequently worked in their Louisville, KY and Columbus, OH offices.

In 1965, Joyce married the late William D. Pleasants (US Army Ret. Maj.). While taking time to rear two young children, she volunteered extensively in the military communities, of which she was a part. She received numerous awards for her work as Volunteer Coordinator with the Army Community Service for assisting the next of kin of seriously-injured servicemen during the Vietnam War and establishing a Sickle Cell Anemia information and testing program at the Presidio of San Francisco. In 1973, Joyce was named as the Sixth Army's Military Wife of the Year.

Joyce's reentry into the workforce was as the Director of Data Processing for the Aurora, CO Public Schools —a position she held for nine years. Jet Magazine took notice in 1984 when they published news of her being named the director, Management Information Communications Systems at the National Headquarters of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. in Washington, DC. Joyce oversaw the computerization of the sorority. In 1992, she retired for health reasons from the Alexandria City (VA) Public Schools as Executive Director of Management Information Services.

Faith and service were the foundations of Joyce's life. Her belief that, "all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee" (Chronicles 29:14),

led her to be a lifelong tither. Although busy with professional and organizational activities, she never neglected her spiritual and church life. From teaching and playing piano for the Sunday school at St. Stephens as a child, to serving as Senior Warden at The Church of the Holy Redeemer in Denver for four years in the late 1970s, to serving on the Diocese of Washington's Mission Development Advisory Commission. In the 1980s, Joyce was appointed to the Episcopal Commission for Black Ministry (ECBM). It was at a ECBM conference where she first met the Reverend Vincent P. Harris.

Joyce and Vincent were married in 1986. Their life together in the Washington, DC area began when Vincent was named Episcopal Chaplain at Howard University. Subsequently, in 1991, when Vincent became the Rector of St. George's Episcopal Church in northwest DC, Joyce got a new title—First Lady. At St. George's, Joyce was a lector and was active in the Episcopal Church Women, Voices of Praise choir, communications committee, bible study, and the Order of the Daughter's of the King.

During their 38 years of marriage, Joyce and Vincent enjoyed traveling, but above all they simply enjoyed being together talking and laughing. Joyce enjoyed many hobbies over her lifetime including cooking and sewing. For many years, Joyce's friends and family counted on receiving her handmade Easter and Christmas cards. These beautiful creations were a labor of love, sent to more than 300 each year.

Joyce is survived by her husband the Reverend Vincent Powell Harris; son Michael D. Pleasants of Silver Spring, MD; daughter Angela M. Pleasants of Denver, CO; step-daughter Phoenix Rainbow Butterfly Harris-Johnston (Raheem) of Kirkland, WA; grandchildren, Toussaint, Elijah and Isabella; brother William A. Brown, Jr. (Linda) of Las Vegas, NV; special cousin Janice

Dennis of Washington, DC; niece Tiahuana D. Vaughan of Woodbridge, VA; nephews William A. Brown, III of Bowie, MD and Tyrone Brown of Las Vegas, NV; and a host of other relatives. Joyce died peacefully after a lengthy illness.

Cemetery Details

Private

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN 18. 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. George's Episcopal Church
160 U St. NW
Washington, DC 20001

Service

JUN 18. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

St. George's Episcopal Church
160 U St. NW
Washington, DC 20001

Tribute Wall

HT

“ Joyce was a long time client at LeDons Salon. Joyce was always polite and full of education to me and my other clients. One of my fondest memories was when my husband saw her blue buggy and went out and purchased one just like hers. She will be truly missed by many. Thank you for your allowing me to do your hair for many years. Lenie

Helene Thompson - June 17, 2025 at 08:46 PM

CM

“ Carolyn McGhee purchased the Beautiful Dreams for the family of Mrs. Joyce Brown Harris.



Carolyn McGhee - June 15, 2025 at 11:21 AM

FF

“ From the Bryant & Harrington Family's purchased the Be My Love Bouquet with Red Roses for the family of Mrs. Joyce Brown Harris.



From the Bryant & Harrington Family's - June 13, 2025 at 01:38 PM



“ We the March Family and Marshall-March Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

Marshall-March Funeral Homes - June 09, 2025 at 01:19 PM