



## Lucille Helms Smith

November 22, 1924 - April 9, 2017

Lucille Helms Smith, the youngest of nine children, born to Branard and Lilian Helms, née Murphy on the 22nd of November, 1924 in Radford, Virginia. Branard supported his large family as a brakeman for the railroad. Lilian worked in service of the Radford/Roanoke Virginian aristocracy. The Helms family maintained a well-kept white framed home with an abundant vegetable garden and a few hogs and chickens in the backyard. Lucy, as she was affectionately known growing up, was the sparkle of her parents' eye and the coveted sibling of her older brothers and sisters.

She attended grade school in Radford. During the summers of her youth, Lucy took advantage of her father's rail benefits and rode the train to Washington, D.C. to spend her vacations with her big brothers and their young families. They encouraged her to remain in D.C. to attend Banneker JHS. In 1938, Lucy returned to Virginia to matriculate at the historic Christiansburg Institute (CI) where the University of Virginia is now located. Like many schools of that era, CI was founded to educate the newly freed slaves in southwestern Virginia. As a proud CI alumna, Lucy applied her learned skills in raising her future family.

After graduation and at the end of World War II, Branard's and Lilian's baby daughter returned to Washington to start her life as a woman. She worked at Woodward & Lothrop department store as an elevator operator while she

awaited the results of her application to Freedmen's Nursing School (now, Howard University School of Nursing). During her second year of nursing school, she met the dashing Raymond Alexander Smith, a recent Navy veteran and engineering student at Howard University. After a brief courtship, they betrothed and married at Israel Baptist Church (IBC) in 1950. Lucy hung up her stethoscope and tied on an apron.

"Ray" was very active at IBC. He, soon, became the president of the church usher board. He and Lucy, by this time she preferred to be called "Cile," were attending church socials and meetings while she was pregnant. In early 1951, the handsome couple bought their first home on the banks of the Anacostia River and their first child, Michael, was born in May. Cile took pride in her home. She never forgot her southern roots. She created a vegetable garden of tomatoes, lettuce, and cucumbers in the backyard. She designed an award-winning flower garden on the side of their corner home. Her mother, Miss Lilian, would visit and they shopped at D.C.'s famous Farmers' Market where they bought live chickens. Cile plucked fresh vegetables from her garden, and Miss Lilian plucked the feathers from her fresh kill. When Ray arrived home from work, the whole family ate a good home-cooked meal.

The further Ray rose in the ranks of the church, the more meetings he attended and the bigger their family became. Ray's and Cile's first daughter, Michelle (Shellie), was born in 1953. The Smith family vacations became a tradition of attending the Interdenominational Church Ushers Association (ICUA) conventions throughout the nation. During the days of "Jim Crow", the young family neither had an air condition car nor the ability to stay in hotels, motels and eat in public restaurants. Cile was world renowned for her resourcefulness. She baked and prepared enough provisions for the family to stay nourished. The only time the family stopped was to enjoy the scenery, gas and to use the restroom. They ate their meals in parks. When Ray became the first vice president of the ICUA, he bought a Volkswagen bus and

the family, which now included Craig (Ricky), Antoinette (Toni), and Pamela (Pam), made its epic cross-country trip along with fellow usher and family friend, Mrs. Carrie Chapman to San Francisco, California. Cile had Ray to stop at roadside vegetable stands where she and Carrie bought fresh provisions. The Smith caravan visited the national parks of the great west and camped-out at the Yellowstone Park.

Like Jesus in Matthew 15:36, Ray would give Cile a small check, and she made miracles happen. She was creative and talented with planning meals and clothing her family. She was a genius with a sewing machine. Cile made curtains for her kitchen and dresses for her daughters. She upholstered her furniture and painted. The in-home seamstress taught her sons how to mend their clothes. Extended family and friends looked forward to her meals and made excuses to “just happen to be in the neighborhood” during dinner-time.

In 1973, Ray answered the call to the ministry and, later, became the pastor of the First Guiding Star Baptist Church (GSBC) in Brookland, DC. As GSBC’s First Lady, she held down that awesome responsibility while, also, being the First Lady of the newly-elected president of the ICUA. The First Lady accompanied her husband to South Korea to represent the ICUA. During that period, nothing became easier for her because “Pastor Ray” began to lose his eyesight and his general health became compromised. As the years progressed, her children began to take a more active role at home and the church. Antoinette became an assistant pastor to her father and Michael served his parents as a trustee and maintained the church facility. Cile made sure that the whole family supported the church.

In 1998, GSBC celebrated the life and homegoing of Pastor Ray. Shortly afterward, Antoinette “Pastor Toni” Smith succeeded him. Early in the new millennium, Cile was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s dementia. She asked her

son, Michael, to promise to never institutionalize her. In the following years, Michael and his wife Alfreda took her to the far reaches of the world. She was taken to Hawaii to visit Pearl Harbor where Ray was stationed during World War II. Cile went to Sydney, Australia and saw kangaroos and koala bears. In planning a trip for her to Africa and China, it was determined that her health would not permit it.

On Palm Sunday, 2017, Cile went home to our heavenly Father, peacefully. Let it be known that she always remained at home and that her later years were filled with undying family love and support. It is believed that the environment created for her was the reason for her extended life. The family would like to express a special recognition to Cile's eldest daughter, Michelle, for her love, commitment and personal sacrifice to the family matriarch. Lucille Helms Smith is survived by children: Michael and Alfreda Layne Smith, Michelle Smith Freeman, Craig and Sharon Smalls-Smith, Pastor Antoinette Smith, Raymond Sneed, John and Pamela Smith Darby.

Grandchildren: Antoinette Darby Parker, Jason Parker, Kia Darby, Gannon & Tiffany Sneed, Jessica Darby, Marcus, Delmar & Natasha Freeman, Brent Smith, Shari Smith, Edward Freeman, Kaylyn Darby.

Great Grandchildren: Isaiah Wright, Jason Parker Jr, John Michael Parker, Jaylyn Parker, Marcus Stokes Jr, Mason Stokes, Baby Stokes, Alexa Sneed, Ivy Sneed, Mia Sneed, Brooke Freeman, Baby Stokes (expected). She was the last family member of the "Greatest Generation," Aunt Lucy is, also, survived by a whole host of nieces and nephews, in addition to dear friends, neighbors and special caregivers.

# Cemetery Details

## Fort Lincoln Cemetery

3401 Bladensburg Road  
Brentwood, MD 20722

# Previous Events

## Visitation

APR 19. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Israel Baptist Church  
1251 Saratoga Ave  
Washington, DC

## Service

APR 19. 11:00 AM (ET)

Israel Baptist Church  
1251 Saratoga Ave  
Washington, DC

# Tribute Wall



“ *Lucille Helms Smith*

October 23, 2023 at 08:15 AM



“ *I have very special memories of visiting Aunt Lucille and Uncle Ray when my brother and I were boys. That house was so full of love and warmth. I am sad that, physically, she is gone, but I know her spirit lives on, and I know she is delighted to be reunited with her beloved Ray.*

*My heart goes out to the entire family.*

*Anthony Perkins*

Anthony Perkins - April 20, 2017 at 05:40 PM



“ *Sending my deepest condolence to the family. May you find comfort in GOD'S word during this time sorrow. Rom 15:4 help us to appreciate that GOD is one of tender mercy and comfort. He seeks to help during the most difficult times. RH*

RH - April 17, 2017 at 06:15 PM



“ *Whirlpool Global Quality Team purchased the Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet for the family of Lucille Helms Smith.*



Whirlpool Global Quality Team - April 17, 2017 at 04:17 PM

LF

“ Mitchell,

*I heard the news about your mother eternal home going, Your family has my deepest sympathies. As I look at this picture a smile come to my face because she look just as I remembered her, She was a very pretty and sweet spirited lady. I will forever remember our talks at church and her sweet smile. Because of your faith I know you will be ok because you know that your mother is resting with the Lord and all of the other saints that have gone on before her and especially to reunite with your father. I am sure that will be a great reunion. You are always in my thoughts and prayers I am always here if you ever need to talk because I know what it is like to lose your mother. Time heals all wounds but the scare will forever remain. Think on the good times and what she imparted into your life because now you hold that heirloom because it is special and should be held with great esteemed. Your family are truly blessed to have had her for the time she was with you and I too for the time she shared with me. It was very special.*

*Loving Sister in Christ  
Linda Shearin Fitzpatrick  
Newport News, Virginia*



---

Linda Shearin Fitzpatrick - April 17, 2017 at 02:07 PM



“ Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Lucille Helms Smith.



---

April 17, 2017 at 09:29 AM

JL

“ *Sharing more than sixty-five years of friendship has been a tremendous blessing. Cille epitomized strength, charm, class, empathy, warmth, diligence, and compassion. A lovely friend and foxy lady who who will be sorely missed!*  
*Jeanne Lea, Palm Coast, FL*

---

**Jeanne Lea** - April 16, 2017 at 10:23 AM

SH

“ *To the Smith Famiy I extend my deepest sympathies. In our younger days, it was like we were all one big family. I enjoyed the meals your mom prepared, I loved talking to her (I really loved that raspy voice of hers), and I will always remember the compliments she always gave me every time we would see each other! I will forever cherish the memories I have of her. May God continue to keep you all safe in His arms during this time! Rest in heavenly peace Ma Smith!*

---

**SHIRLEY HALL** - April 15, 2017 at 12:19 AM

FC

“ *Friends From The Andrew Rankin Chapel purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Lucille Helms Smith.*



---

**Friends From The Andrew Rankin Chapel** - April 14, 2017 at 01:24 PM

J.

“ *With sincerest sympathy. Please take comfort in knowing that God has promised to one day put an end to death forever. What a blessing that will be for you and me. (Isaiah 25:8) Jesus also showed what he will do in the future. He will resurrect those who have fallen asleep in death, back to a perfect life on a paradise earth. (John 11:20-25) (Luke 23:43) May God bless and comfort you and your family.*

---

**J.C.** - April 13, 2017 at 04:24 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** - April 11, 2017 at 06:02 PM