

*Grace Lillian Johnson*



Grace Lillian Johnson was born February 27, 1920 to Dr. Warren C. Melchor and Beulah V. Tillman Melchor in Fayetteville, North Carolina. The family grew when a second daughter, Beulah was born on July 23, 1921.

Education was very important to the family and Grace graduated from Palmer Memorial Institute at age 16. She enrolled in her mother's Alma Mater, Bennett College and graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in 1940. Her education continued at Cornell University where she received a Master of Science Degree in 1943. With a lifelong love of fashion, both her B.S. and M.S. Degrees were in Home Economics Education. A dedicated lifelong learner, Grace participated in numerous continuing education programs from 1950 to 1979 at American University, University of California – Berkeley, D.C. Teachers College, and the University of Maryland.

Grace started her career as an educator at the J.R. Hawkins High School in Warrenton, NC and became an instructor at Fayetteville State University in Fayetteville, NC. In 1949 she moved to Washington, DC and held jobs in DC Public Schools, Department of Commerce, Department of the Army, and Department of Justice. She taught at McKinley High School in Washington, DC for 16 years until her retirement in 1976. After her retirement, Grace began a career in retail as an official “greeter” at Bloomingdales in White Flint Mall in Rockville, Maryland. Her love of fashion and watching people made this an ideal job until she stopped working in 1984.

Grace married Joseph I. Johnson, Jr. in 1958 and their daughter Wanda was born in 1960. The marriage ended in divorce in 1970.

A lifelong Episcopalian, Grace was a member of several congregations over the years including St. Joseph’s Episcopal Church, Fayetteville, North Carolina, Calvary Episcopal Church, Washington, DC, Saint Michael’s Episcopal Church, Langley Park, Maryland and Church of the Ascension, Silver Spring, Maryland. Grace was a strong woman of faith and maintained her connection with God with daily affirmations.

Grace was an avid reader who loved the theater, fashion design, and stained glass. Her sense of humor was legendary as was her wonderful laugh. Grace loved her family and friends and was a willing sounding board, cheerleader and constant source of often unsolicited advice! She would listen and then say “you have my permission...” to do whatever it was you wanted to do! And her reminder that “this too shall pass” provides continued strength during these days.

Grace approached life with the mantra that in life you will face adversities but it is about how you persevere and keep moving forward. At times, Grace bore the weight of her circumstances on her shoulders but she never let it stop her from moving forward and enjoying life. Grace died on October 13, 2010 at the blessed age of 90. Her determined attitude contributed to her long, healthy, and successful life.

Grace was a joy and inspiration to all those with whom she came in contact. She pushed others to succeed because she knew the power of perseverance and determination. Grace encouraged those around her to be themselves and more importantly be the change they wish to see in the world. She touched many lives with her courage, understanding and words of wisdom.