



REMEMBER, LEST WE FORGET



MARY LIDDELL THOMAS



Mrs. Mary Liddell Thomas, mother of the Humphreys County civil rights movement, passed away June 30, 2023. She turned 99 on June 8. Public visitation will be Friday, July 7, from 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. at Upper Room Fellowship Ministries, Hwy 49, Belzoni, MS. Family visitation will be 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. The Celebration of Life Service will be Saturday, July 8 at 11:00 a.m. at Upper Room Fellowship Ministries. The burial will be at Humphreys County Memorial Garden, Belzoni, MS. Smith Funeral Home of Belzoni, MS is handling arrangements.

Mrs. Thomas graduated from Humphreys County Training School in Louise, MS and taught school for a short while after graduation. She spent the majority of her working life as an entrepreneur working along side her husband, the late Jerry Thomas.

She was a civil rights activist and leader instrumental in organizing voting rights and equal education opportunities for Blacks in the Delta.

Mrs. Thomas used her business facility to arrange and plan civil rights marches and boycotts of white-owned businesses in her area. The

segregated movie theater (which allowed only whites downstairs) and the Dairy Queen (which did not allow Blacks inside) were among businesses that were boycotted.

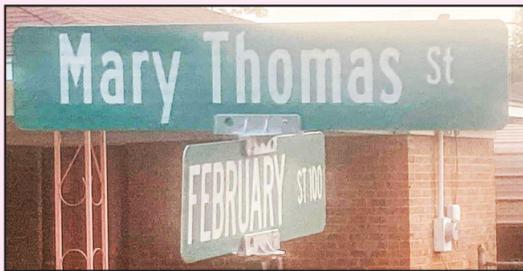
She was the first Black female in Humphreys County to register to vote.

In 1966, Mrs. Thomas sent five of her six children to an all-white school in Belzoni, MS under the Freedom of Choice for Equal Education by President Lyndon B. Johnson.

This civil rights pioneer was active during Freedom Summer in 1964. She housed and fed many of the civil rights activists who came from the North to help lead in the Freedom Movement.

In 2021, her courageous life was honored by the Humphreys County Cultural Museum.

Mrs. Thomas leaves to cherish her memories: two sons, John Jeffery Thomas, Douglasville, GA, and Cornelius Thomas, Detroit, MI; two daughters, Dr. Cassandra Faye Thomas, Belzoni, MS, and Iphogenier Thomas Barry, Fresco, TX; 21 grandchildren; 43 great grandchildren; 7 great, great grandchildren; and nephews, nieces, other relatives, and close friends.



ROBERT JOSEPH COLEMAN

Robert Joseph Coleman transitioned June 30, 2023, at his home in Jackson, MS. Beside him was his daughter and Mississippi distinguished author, Meredith Coleman McGee, who also served as his caregiver for the past 10 years. A memorial service will be held Wednesday, July 12, high noon at Collins Funeral Home, 415 N. Farish St., Jackson, MS. Interment will be the following day in the Alabama National Cemetery, Montevallo, AL. Sympathy cards may be sent to Meredith C. McGee: 1052 Maria Court, Jackson, MS 39204.

Mr. Coleman was born April 10, 1939, in Gadsden, AL to Joseph James Coleman of D'Lo, (Simpson County) MS and Beulah Mae Adkins of Gadsden, (Etowah County) AL.

He attended St. John Christian Methodist Church, of which his grandparents were founding members and his mother served as a director of the youth choir.

In his youth, Mr. Coleman was quite versatile. He played trumpet in a local jazz band and was a star athlete at Carver High School. No one was surprised when he showed up for band practice wearing his football uniform. He followed a long line of family members who attended Carver, which was later converted into a museum.

Mr. Coleman served his country as a Marine. He obtained an athletic scholarship to Jackson State College (now Jackson State University); he was a vital part of his football team's defense as a linebacker known in high school as BIG M and in college as BIG BOB. Today, his high school acco-

lades and class pictures are preserved in Central-Carver Legacy Museum on Walnut Street in Gadsden, AL.

He obtained his undergraduate degree from Jackson State College in Biology in 1960. Shortly afterwards, he married Hazel Janell Meredith, the sister of James Howard Meredith, an American treasure. Four children were added



to their union: Robert Joseph, Meredith Sealey, Evalyn Roxianna, and Willa Janell. He married his present wife, Catherine McKay in 1981. They had one child, Jozzlyn.

Professionally, Robert Coleman was a fundraiser for statewide Head Start programs. He was a political strategist and a trailblazer. He worked in the co-op movement in the 1970s during the War on Poverty campaign for STAR with activists such as Fannie Lou Hamer and Jesse Morris. He threw his hat in the ring for Congress in 1976 against Thad Cochran. In the 1970s, he and his brother-in-law, James H. Meredith formed a political

group and mentored Jackson State University students, including Louis Armstrong, who was the first member to be elected to city government in Jackson, MS (1985).

Also to his credit, Mr. Coleman was a Bible scholar; a Christian Hebrew; a Methodist evangelist; a chef; a pawn shop owner on the West End in Atlanta, GA; a NASA plant

Williams Hill of Fayetteville, NC, Jossrael Coleman Hall, Khadiya Spaezi-Aziz, and Calla Ridgeway of Jackson, MS, Darren (Jamelia) Dozier of Lithonia, GA, and Terrell Barry and Bianca Barry of Chicago, IL; aunts, Margaret Adkins Herring Lightsey of Gadsden, AL, and Lee Walker Adkins of Peoria, AZ; 10 great-grandchildren; and a host of nieces, nephews, other relatives, and friends.

He was preceded in death by his grandfather, Thomas Edward Adkins (1884-1963), a former butcher; grandmother, Eve Adkins (1897-1953), known effectively as Christmas Eve for having been born on that day; father, Joseph James Coleman (1916-1976); mother, Beulah Mae Adkins Coleman Sealey Thomas (1921-2017); stepfather, John W. Sealey (1914-1976); stepfather, Pleasant Thomas (1918-2008); stepbrother, John W. Sealey Jr. (1937-2018); stepmother, Elizabeth Smith Coleman (1929-2083); sons, Robert Joseph Coleman II (1961-1989) and Ronald Barry (1962-2019); stepson, Kanyama Dunn (1972-2020); and son-in-law, William Earl McGee Jr. (1965-1921).

His daughter, Meredith wrote: "Robert Joseph Coleman has joined the ancestors who are watching over us still standing. Earlier this year, my father said to me, 'Will (his son-in-law) lives on the moon. He is my best friend.' The moon is the brightest star in the hemisphere. One is particularly special to rest on it. Two weeks ago, he added, 'Meredith this is the end of my life. Thank you!'"

A.C. MCKENZIE SR.

Deacon A.C. McKenzie Sr. was born on December 7, 1924, in Edwards, Mississippi to his parents, Mrs. Edith Green McKenzie and Mr. Reuben McKenzie, who reared him as his beloved son. Mrs. McKenzie passed away when he was 12 years old. His biological father was Mr. Charlie Rozell, who resided in New York City, NY. His maternal grandparents were Mr. Jim Green and Mrs. Vinnie Shelton Green. His paternal grandparents were Mr. George McKenzie Sr., Mrs. Lizzie McKenzie, and Mrs. Ollie Rozell. All were born and reared in Mississippi.

He attended and completed his education in Hinds County Public School System.

He was baptized and remained a faithful member and deacon at Little Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Edwards, Mississippi. A.C. was also a member of a fraternal organization of the Prince Hall Free and Accepted Masons of Edwards, MS - The Flaming Swords Masonic Lodge. He served in the Western, Northern, and Southern sectors of his lodge while attaining the 32nd degree.

In 1943, A.C. was drafted into the U.S. Army, where he fought courageously in World War II. While serving in combat, A.C. and his squad members were bombed as he was driving an Army Artillery truck across the Rhine River near Mannheim, Germany. They were hit by shrapnel from the bombing causing him to be hospitalized for a lengthy time. Most of his squad members were killed, while a few were wounded. A.C. was honorably discharged from his military duties as a result of being wounded in action. While serving his country, he was awarded many citations and decorations, including the "Purple Heart" Medal of Honor for his courageous act in combat. What he remembered most about his military career was his opportunity to travel to foreign countries, such as: France, Scotland, England, Germany, and a few others.

He never forgot the wounded and fallen comrades he had to leave behind. After returning home, he decided to stay in Edwards, Mississippi, to help his dad and other siblings with farming chores. As a favorite pastime, he would frequent the town with friends and cousins. There he met and was intrigued by the most adorable, shyest, and classiest young lady, Edna Ruth Stokes, who was working in

one of the local stores. The two fell in love and were married in November, 1947. They were blessed with thirteen children. She preceded him in death in 1994. Her passing shattered his world.

Also preceding him in death were his parents, Mr. Reuben McKenzie, Mrs. Edith Green McKenzie and Mr. Charlie Rozell; his grandparents; three children, Ms. Edith P. McKenzie, Mrs. Martha Franklin, and Mr. A.C. McKenzie Jr.; four sons-in-law, Mr. Jimmie Dale Foster, Mr.



Earl Gilmore, Mr. John Franklin, and Mr. J. B. Mosley; three grandchildren, Ms. Jada Govan, Mr. Johnny Johnson, and Mr. Rory R. McKenzie; eleven siblings, Mrs. Daisy Bishop, Rev. Chester Baity, Mrs. Elizabeth Collins, Mrs. Mozella Flaggs, Mrs. Beatrice Green, Mr. Little George McKenzie, Mr. J. W. McKenzie, Mr. Reuben McKenzie, Mrs. Gladys Rayford, Mrs. Virginia Smith, and Mrs. Peggy Williams; four sisters-in-law; and seven brothers-in-law.

Throughout his beautiful life, A.C. instilled God, education, and hard work into his children. He would always say, "If a man doesn't work, he ain't fit to eat." He never missed any of his children's school extra-curricular activities, award programs, and taking his children to Sunday school and church. He also would load neighborhood children on the back of his truck and off to church they would go.

Mr. McKenzie will be remembered as a family man, a World War II Veteran, Purple Heart recipient, greatest American farmer - raising goats, cattle, rams, hogs, and chickens; an avid gardener - corn,

peas, butterbeans, cucumbers, peanuts, potatoes, squash, greens, tomatoes, okra, peppers, melons, pumpkins, beets, etc.; skilled concrete finisher; and a well-regarded businessman who was known to Mississippians as the "best" sausage maker around. He was a contractual worker with Alcorn State University Department of Agriculture and Mississippi State University Department of Agriculture. Mr. A.C. provided the students from those universities hands-on educational opportunities to broaden their knowledge to work to become the best version of themselves within the field.

A.C. lived in the Edwards-Raymond, Mississippi communities for most of his life. Recently, he moved to Clinton with his daughter, Yolanda (Tom), due to his failing health. There, he enjoyed sitting in the backyard with his son-in-law, watching deer as they graze the green grasses.

He leaves to cherish the memory of those happy times to his children: Nine daughters and four sons, Mrs. Vertis (Albert) Gibbs, Arlington, TX; Ms. Bonnie McKenzie, Byram, MS; Mr. Curtis McKenzie, Raymond, MS; Mrs. Shirley Gilmore, Clinton, MS; Mr. Johnny (Dorothy) McKenzie, Edwards, MS; Mrs. Brenda Wilson, Raymond, MS; Mr. Kenneth McKenzie, Raymond, MS; Mrs. Janice (Vernon) Govan, Arlington, TX; Mrs. Yolanda (Tom) Dickey, Clinton, MS; Mrs. Cassandra (Donnie) Steverson, Clinton, MS; Mrs. Stephanie Foster, Jackson, MS; Mrs. Susie Mosely, Edwards, MS and Mr. Jessie (Valarie) Miller, Jackson, MS; forty grandchildren; forty-four great grandchildren; three great-great grandchildren; one sister, Mrs. Dorothy (Wiley) Burkes, Harvey, IL; one sister-in-law, Adlena McKenzie of Memphis, TN; special cousins, Mrs. Cora Adams, Mr. Lynn Arthur Cooper, Mr. Abraham Green, Mrs. Bertha Mac Nelson, Ruby Moore of Raymond, MS and Mrs. Mable Mason; a special friend, Mr. Tommy Walker; a godson and caring friend, Mr. Walter Montgomery; a special family friend, Helen Fultz; and a host of nieces, nephews, other relatives and friends.

Deacon McKenzie passed June 25, 2023. Funeral services were held July 1 at Raymond High School Gymnasium, 14050 MS Highway 18, Raymond, MS 39154; burial in Little Zion Church Cemetery, 3984 Middle Rd., Edwards, MS.