

FINAL FUNERAL RITES

A Service in Thanksgiving for the Life of

Tona Maanaa Seward-Mills

September 22, 1935 ~ January 15, 2014



Service

Saturday, February 22, 2014 ~ 9:30 a.m.

GRACE CHURCH IN NEWARK

950 Broad Street, Newark, NJ

BIOGRAPHY

Iona MaaNaa Heward-Mills was born on the 22nd of September 1935 to Albert Gillies Heward-Mills and Rebecca Naa Dee Hammond. Named Maa Naa after her paternal grandmother, she was the seventh of ten children.

MaaNaa's father was a barrister of Middle Temple England and a renowned Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Ghana. Her mother was the daughter of the late Mantse Daniel Philip Nii Boi Hammond and Mrs. Elizabeth Ayele Aryee, herself a queen mother of Asere. This was the rich heritage into which MaaNaa was born.

MaaNaa grew up in a strict yet loving caring Christian home. She was a charming, respectful, determined lady. However, she was left-handed. This left-handed oddity, as it was seen at the time, dogged her through her primary education at Bishop's Girl's School in Accra. But MaaNaa prevailed and continued on to Korle Gonno Secondary School with her sister Naa Choi.

By the time she had finished, she knew she was heading into the hair fashion industry. Not quite what her father would have envisaged. Yet she knew she wanted to pursue a professional career and leave her mark on society as a hair fashion designer. So off to Liberia she went to train. Then later, she arrived in the mid 1950's in New York right in the thick of the Civil Rights Movement.

Endowed with business acumen and astute entrepreneurship, she settled down in Howard Beach, Queens. MaaNaa's hard work paid off with the opening of her very own hair fashion salon – Milair's Hair Fashion. This is where she worked until she retired and moved down to North Carolina.

However, while hair fashion was her artwork, her life's passion was the Lord. This was her heart. 'If it be thy will', she would say. There was nothing she did which would not go before the Lord first. Maa Naa was ready for the Lord. 'If God would spare my life', she used to say. Well, this time he did Not.

Ours is to Trust in the LORD with all our hearts and not to lean on our own understanding; but in all our ways acknowledge him, and he will make our paths, like he made MaaNaa's path, straight.

MaaNaa is survived by several sisters and brothers, nieces, nephews and grand nieces and nephews. We are indebted to MaaNaa, who touched each of our lives in a meaningful and tangible way. We will miss you, but look forward to meeting again before the Lord. You are Love and we Love you, may you rest in peace.

A TRIBUTE FROM THE THOMPSON-QUARTEY FAMILY
She was our Auntie MaaNaa and we her special children.

Growing up in Accra, Ghana, our dear Auntie MaaNaa worked with the then Kingsway Department Store, and boy, were we the best dressed kids on the block! Auntie MaaNaa styled us with imported (ready-made) attires and gave us many exciting toys.

Our dear Auntie was a strict, yet loving disciplinarian. We recall one evening when we were home alone with no one in charge. Our parents had gone out, so we thought we could do whatever we wanted, so we ran around the house helter-skelter.

Unexpectedly, Auntie MaaNaa popped in with her commanding presence. Our messing around stopped abruptly. She sized us up and cautioned us with this query. "Tidy the house and back to your books"! She is fond of saying to us: "Do not let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do". She challenged us, and gave us an education for life. It was good advice then, and it remains a great one even now. She encouraged us to face our future with confidence. When Auntie MaaNaa spoke, we listened. Little by little we got better with her message of hope and encouragement. She was all about good manners and cleanliness, and so on our return home from school, we always had to check our appearance before approaching her or else woe betides us! Also, we had better be ready for her quiz on what was taught in school that day. Auntie MaaNaa was a passionate inspirer and motivator. She was a woman of perseverance, compassion, and she aged with dignity and grace. She was truly a mother to us in many ways.

A funny story we remember about our dear Aunt was when she promised our sister Chris that she will bring her along when she left for the United States. With this promise in mind, our sister announced to the entire class at the end of fourth grade that she wasn't coming back because her aunt was taking her to the US. The entire class gave Chris a sendoff party with a bash, gifts and all. Apparently Auntie MaaNaa left without Chris, so when school reopened and Chris was not getting ready to go to school, our late mother, Maa Bea, asked Chris; "my child, aren't you going to school"? She replied, "I thought I was going to America with Auntie MaaNaa, so I told my classmates and they threw a party for me, so I cannot go back to that school". This is simply one of the fond memories about our Auntie MaaNaa that still bring a smile to our faces.

Auntie MaaNaa, you've gone so suddenly, and we are grieving. But now we have to move on with life, guided by your legacy and pieces of sound advice, not looking back. In our grief, we are reminded of the quote: "When it's over, I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened or full of argument".

[Mary Oliver]

With heavy hearts,
THE THOMPSON-QUARTEY FAMILY

***“Death leaves a heartache no one can heal,
Love leaves a memory no one can steal”***

[From a headstone in Ireland]



Acknowledgement

Perhaps you sent a lovely card or sat quietly in a chair.

Perhaps you sent a floral piece If so, we saw it there.

Perhaps you spoke the kindest words as any friend could say.

Perhaps you were not there at all just thought of us on that day.

Whatever you did to console our hearts, We Thank You, Whatever the part.

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THE (EVER) LASTING FACE OF AUNTIE IONA

A Tribute

*“Hide not Your face from me in the day
when I am in distress.” [Psalm 102]*

Auntie MaaNaa has a face and she never hid her face from anyone until the very end.

One always knew when one was in her good books or not. Her gentle loving smile would melt anyone’s heart. But, oh, how that chilling blank gaze could crush a spirit.

What can we learn from Auntie MaaNaa’s face? You knew exactly where and how you stood with her. She said things plainly and directly. Her ‘Yes’ was simply ‘Yes’ and her ‘No’, simply ‘No’. Difficult when one is on the receiving end, but is this not an elementary biblical teaching? She was most certainly not two-faced. There was always a way to win her back even after one had been on the receiving end of a chilling blank gaze. She taught us the essence of forgiveness and reconciliation.

She had a living faith which she shared with all those willing to receive it. Her day began with God, her first words were

directed to God and her day ended with God. She would say her prayers and read her Bible before anything. When she went to work, she began with God. She dedicated her day's work into God's care. She ended her day with God with thanks and praise and prayed for protection for the ride home. God was her Alpha and Omega. This is the face of true spiritual discipline.

Need a friend, counseling, a cry, a laugh, money, a cuddle, to be told you are loved? Auntie MaaNaa was never far. When she gave, she gave unconditionally. She did not let her left hand know what her right hand was doing. There are many 'financial giants' in our world today who could not touch as many lives as Auntie MaaNaa touched and changed with the little she had. What little she had, she gave, and it came back pressed down, shaken together, and running over for the next one. She was the living face of God's Bible promises.

Iona is the name of a small Scottish island known for its tranquillity and natural beauty, where Saint Columba, 'the dove of the church', founded a monastery. Auntie MaaNaa was for many, at different times, their center of tranquillity. Our beautiful dove has now taken flight. But this is not her last flight. She will fly again when the Lord comes, for she loved the Lord and the Lord loved her.

We were not there in her last living moments on earth and neither can we fully comprehend all the events. But we know her best friend and confidant, Jesus Christ was with her. It is this promise that encouraged her to praise the Lord in all circumstances. As the psalmist urges 'Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples. For great is His love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD.' Psalm 117.

A TRIBUTE FROM HER GREAT NIECE AND GODCHILD

For Me. Auntie Iona signifies a pride in me that propels me to succeed. Above the racism and mental manipulation that plagues our society – she represents nobility that once was and is waiting to return in us. She carried a sense of dignity and pride that reminds me of the beautiful legacy I descend from.

A Pioneer. On my side, she was the first to come. Never did she forget or neglect her role in moving our family forward. She extended a hand and welcomed all to experience, not only the delights of America, but the Excitement of New York City! It is because of her, that my family is here; and I acknowledge the calling of her legacy: To Do Well, And Do Well For Others.

My First Home. Essentially I am one of her older daughters. My GRAND Aunt and GOD Mother welcomed me into the world and furnished a home of love, encouragement, faith and peace - all which dwell within me today.

“Hiya Michie!” she would always say as her smile lit up her naturally smooth, beautifully glowing chocolate skin, high cheekbones and twinkling eyes.

To her, I attribute my mindset, my growth and ultimately, my success. She reminds me of the strong matriarch’s role, and what it means to be of the Heward-Mills, Robertson family line: A quiet pride, that stems from always striving to exceed life’s challenges, with humility and grace; never forgetting where one came from, while helping others along the way.

*Thank you, Auntie Iona.
I love You.*

**Cheers To A Job Well
Done**

*Rest in Peace Now;
Until We Meet Again.*

~Michelle Ayodele Christian

