

In Loving Memory of

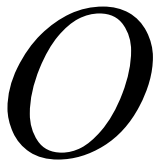


Mary Ruth Riley Barnes

October 19, 1924

November 17, 2014

Obituary



One of the few remaining true Harlem doyennes has taken her final walk down the 125th Street Promenade. **Mary Ruth Riley Barnes** (known affectionately as Mrs. Ruth Barnes), 90, transitioned from this life on Monday, November 17th, 2014.

Born the only beloved child of Mary Lee and Roy Riley in Toccoa Georgia on October 19th, 1924, Ruth's parents moved from Toccoa to Cincinnati, Ohio in her adolescence, where she attended The Garfield School and Hughes High School. After her primary schooling, Ruth would work as a manager and salesperson in the delicatessen owned by Pop, her grandfather. At the suggestion of a family friend, she attended Clark College in Atlanta, Georgia. Her matriculation brought both newfound freedom and academic challenges, both of which she relished and took advantage of. It was during this time that she would also become a cheerleader, a member of the Spanish Club, and a founding member of The Ohio Social Club. In her sophomore year, she assumed the reigns of Grammateus of the Alpha Pi chapter of The Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. before graduating in 1946.

Ruth was ecstatic to move to New York City with her mother (whom she completely adored) in the early 1950's, where both mother and daughter very quickly installed themselves onto the Harlem society scene—Ruth living independently one building away from her mother. She capitalized on her excellent diction and delivery of the English language by not only serving as the announcer at her church but by also training to become a disc jockey, earning her FCC lifetime license (being the only female in her training class at the time). Her personal life bloomed when she met and married the love of her life, Willie Adams Barnes (“Mr. Pete”) in 1954, and then gave birth to their son, Byron Stephen Barnes on February 9, 1955, who then became the second love of her life. As doting of a mother as her mother had been, Ruth made sure that Byron experienced the best of everything, exposure to the Arts and education being paramount. Byron would graduate with a plethora of honors from Rhodes Prep, under the stewardship of his very proud mother. She considered Byron her greatest success, and often spoke of how blessed she felt that she shared the same infallible, inseparable love with her child that she shared with her mother. The fact that she would spend her life in such close proximity to her son in later years (their apartments were right next door to each other) delighted her even further.

Her professional career blossomed soon after when she became a manager at the Internal Revenue Service, where she worked for 30 years until her retirement in 2003. Always a fashion plate, she wowed the 30-plus coworkers that reported to her at the IRS with her sense of flawless flair during work hours, and bedazzled her personal social circle with her opulent and extensive garb when attending evening functions. It was while preparing for these evening functions that Ruth would inspire her son's professional career. Watching his mother get ready for various events, Byron became enthralled with his mother's affinity for makeup and beauty. Ruth honed in on this, and would eventually have Byron doing her makeup as she prepared for the various evening functions she attended. This led to Byron becoming a world renowned makeup artist, and cosmetics powerhouse, launching both his own beauty line and serving as Creative Director for Iman Cosmetics, much to Mrs. Barnes' delight. Watching her son's professional achievements come to fruition (which also included him appearing on (“The Oprah Winfrey Show”) brought Ruth immeasurable joy. This bond between mother and son, based on an undying love, admiration and respect for one another, would be the third love of her life.

Forever ahead of the sartorial curve, whether sporting blonde shoulder-length tresses with a beaded opera coat at The Cotton Club or sashaying around her birthday parties at the Rihga Royal Hotel in a silk blouse, gabardine wide-legged trousers, a beret and contrasting swing coat- Mrs. Barnes LOVED fashion! A ‘lover of pretty things, as well as a bargain’ (according to her), she never made apologies for her penchant to shop. She was an avid and voracious reader, receiving delivery of the New York Times daily and various magazines monthly. Her highly anticipated and heavily attended Christmas parties and brunches were testament to her love of a fine dining experience, which she never declined the opportunity to partake in.

She LIVED!

She made her home in Harlem and remained a stalwart member of her community by maintaining her interests in many charities (such as Memorial Sloane-Kettering Cancer Center, The Paralyzed Veterans of America, the NAACP as well as the Easter Seals) while inspiring many with her sage words on everything from how to budget to how to navigate life- and we are all the better for it.

Mary Ruth Riley Barnes is preceded in death by her husband of 40 years, Willie Adams Barnes. She will forever remain in the hearts of those that loved her. She leaves behind to celebrate her life: her son, Byron Stephen Barnes (whom she affectionately calls “Stevie”); and a host of family, relatives and cherished coworkers..

Rest In Peace, Mary Ruth Riley Barnes...

Service

Sunday, November 23, 2014 - 4:00pm

UNITY FUNERAL CHAPELS, Inc.

2352 8th Avenue, New York, NY 10027

Rev. Dr. Edward Culvert, Officiating

John Stanley, Organist

Order of Service

Processional

Selection

Saint Christopher

Scripture Readings

Prayer

Acknowledgements

Poem

Sharon Fredrick

Remarks

Byron Barnes

Selection

Saint Christopher

Remarks

Angelo Ellerbee

Obituary

Chad Groom

Eulogy

Committal

Final Viewing

Recessional

Entombment

St. Michael's Mausoleum
East Elmhurst, New York

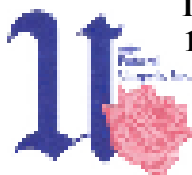
God Is Here

God is here
in the midst of a storm
to give you peace.
God is here during trials
and temptations
to give you guidance.
God is here through turmoil and strife
to give you patience.
God is here among prejudice and hatred
to give you love.
God is here whenever things aren't going right
to give you hope.
God is here when you give up
on your dreams
to give you faith.
At any time
and in any situation,
you are never alone.
God is always here.

Barbara Cage

Acknowledgement

The family acknowledges with deep appreciation all acts of kindness extended to them during this bereavement hour. May God bless you for all your thoughtfulness and concern.



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