

A woman with dark hair, wearing a grey blazer over a black top, a yellow lei, and a large gold medallion necklace, is speaking into a microphone. She is holding a white envelope with pink edges. To her left are two large, vibrant pink and white flowers. The background is dark with some blue light spots. At the bottom of the image, there is a decorative border of grey, spherical beads.

***Celebrating The Life of***

**Maggie Lean Burnett**

**Sunrise: March 17, 1934**

**Sunset: January 15, 2017**

## Obituary

**A Time to Be Born:** Maggie Lean Harley, the eighth child of the late Willie and Maggie Harley, was born on March 17, 1934 in Allendale, South Carolina.

**A Time to Live:** Along with her two sisters, Maggie was educated at Scofield Academy in Aiken, South Carolina. She was saved and baptized as a child and attended Monetta Baptist Church in South Carolina. Like her parents, farming and gardening were in her blood. They instilled a strong work ethic in her teaching that “if it ain’t worth working for and fighting for the right way, it ain’t worth having. If there’s something you want, you’ve gotta work hard to earn it.”

She came to New York on a visit with her brother, Willie, Jr., in the early 1950’s. She liked it so much she got a place in the surrounding neighborhood and New York City became her home in 1956. Sometime later, she met and married Walter Burnett. On March 12, 1968, they moved into 551 West 149th Street and he was the superintendent of the building. That was her home for the rest of her life.

In addition, Maggie worked as a domestic worker in New Jersey for renowned author, Robert Ludlum and his family. She also managed the Straight Arrow laundromat for six years. After the death of her husband in 1982, she became the superintendent of the building and until her illness and death had been managing at least two to three other buildings.

**A Time to Build Up:** Maggie never really retired because to her retirement meant finding something else to do because, in her own words, “I can’t sit still; it’s not in me.” In 1974, she became the caretaker of a vacant lot at 564 West 149th Street, cleaning it and planting a garden. She worked (had a permit as a Drug Buster) with the 30th Precinct to rid the area of drug dens and carved out a garden in the space, getting neighbors (the 500 Block Association of 149th Street Garden) involved in what would become part of the Green Thumb Project. A lot of the produce from the garden was distributed to the elderly and disabled in the neighborhood. She was also a member of the South Washington Heights and North Harlem Residents Association another organization focused on improving the neighborhood.

The garden was saved from housing development by the New York Restoration Project (NYRP) led by Bette Midler and Maggie was rewarded with recognition for her thirty years of tireless and fearless efforts to improve the area and caring for the community garden. The garden was the first endowed restoration project of the NYRP Garden Trust.

Maggie was honored in a celebration renaming the garden as “Maggie’s Garden” on September 20, 2002 with Bette Midler, President Clinton and Charles Rangel and others attending the ceremony. Many parties for children in the community have been hosted, block parties, and it has served to solidify the community.

In 2011, Maggie was one of three New Yorkers to receive President Obama’s Presidential Call to Service Award.

**A Time to Love and to Laugh:** Maggie and her husband did not have any children. She loved animals, especially dogs. Her favorite breed was the Pitbull. She often spoke of her dog, King, as her son. And, she loved a dog named Lady whose owner, Lauren, brought her to visit Maggie in the rehabilitation center; it brought her such joy.

For years and years, Maggie was a diehard Yankees fan; if they were playing, she was watching. She also loved wrestling. Besides being fiercely independent, strong willed, trustworthy and fearless, she had a soft spot for children and helping the elderly in the community. She had an opinion about everything and loved to discuss politics.

**A Time to Die:** Over time, Maggie developed a serious health condition that would eventually led to her death on January 15, 2017 at the Isabella Rehabilitation Center. She was preceded in death by her seven siblings, Willie Harley, Jr., Walter Harley, Robert Harley, Johnnie Harley, Willie Van Harley, Bessie Lee Carter and Betty Joe Ferrell.

She leaves to mourn one brother-in-law, cousins, a host of nieces and nephews, great nieces, great nephews, neighbors, and friends.

Service

Thursday, January 26, 2017 - 6:00 p.m.

UNITY FUNERAL CHAPELS, INC.

2352 8th Avenue • New York, NY 10027

*Order of Service*

Hymn of Comfort....."Blessed Assurance"

*Scripture Readings*

Old Testament - Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

New Testament - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 and Revelation 1:3-5a

Prayer of Consolation.....Minister

Selection....."Going Up Yonder"

Reflections.....Friends, Family, etc.

Selection

Acknowledgements.....Family

Reading of Obituary (silently)

Eulogy and Invitation.....Minister

Final Viewing

Benediction

*Final Disposition*

Oxford Hills Crematory

Chester, New York

# *I'm Free*

*Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free  
I'm following the path God laid for me  
I took his hand when I heard Him call*

*I turned my back and left it all.*

*I could not stay another day.*

*To laugh, to love, to work or play.*

*Tasks left undone must stay that way,*

*I found that peace at the close of day.*

*If my parting has left a void,*

*Then fill it up with remembered joy.*

*A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss,*

*Oh, yes these things I too will miss.*

*Be not burdened with times of sorrow,*

*I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.*

*My life's been full, I savored much.*

*Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.*

*Perhaps my time seemed all too brief,*

*Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.*

*Lift up your heart and share with me,*

*God wanted me now, He set me free!*

*-author unknown*

## *Acknowledgement*

The family of **Maggie L. Burnett** wishes to acknowledge with deep appreciation the many expressions of love, concern and kindness shown to our aunt during her illness and to us during our time of bereavement. May God bless and keep you in His care.

2352 8th Avenue • Manhattan, NY • (212) 666-8300

1406 Pitkin Avenue • Brooklyn, NY • (718) 774-1023

1018 Prospect Avenue • Bronx, NY • (718) 542-3833

Clifford V. James, President & CEO

[www.unityfuneralchapels.com](http://www.unityfuneralchapels.com)

[email: unityfc@aol.com](mailto:unityfc@aol.com)

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