



Ella Ruth Jones Richardson

July 12, 1936 - November 8, 2015

Ella Ruth Jones Richardson was the eldest of 14 children born to her parents and one of nine who survived to adulthood. They lived in Brunswick County, near Freeman.

As the eldest, she washed clothes, cooked, cleaned and helped with her siblings while her parents worked, according to the family. She also worked on the family's 27-acre farm, where tobacco was the main cash crop. She became a member of Freeman Baptist Church at an early age.

With nurturing from her first teachers, she decided early to become one herself.

Mrs. Richardson, who became the first female in her family to graduate from a four-year college and retired in 1997 as an honored teacher in the Richmond school system, died Nov. 8 in a Bowie, Md., retirement community. She was 79.

She will be honored at a memorial service at 11 a.m. Saturday, today, at Fourth Baptist Church, 2800 P St. in Richmond.

She graduated from Solomon Russell High School in Lawrenceville in 1954. A yearbook editor quipped under her name that year, "Ella Jones knows her

lesson in every class. Everyone knows that Ella will pass,” according to an email from the family.

After high school, she planned on working in Hackensack, N.J., to save money to go to college the next winter. However, despite the financial burden that it placed on the family, her father gave her \$100 to pay for her first semester’s tuition that fall at Saint Paul’s College in Lawrenceville. He later said it was the best investment he ever made.

Her transcript so impressed college officials that she received financial assistance.

She later was inducted into the Alpha Kappa Mu national scholarship honor society, and she pledged the Sigma Gamma Rho sorority.

During summer months, Mrs. Richardson was a domestic worker in New York. She often shared with family members that her employers would not allow her to clean the kitchen floor with a mop. They required her to scrub the floor by hand, on her hands and knees. She often said this was a catalyst to complete her college education, according to the email statement.

In 1958, Mrs. Richardson became the valedictorian of her college graduating class. That fall, she began teaching at Fairmount Elementary School in Richmond, where black students were attending with whites for the first time, during desegregation of city schools.

Her seventh-grade teacher officiated at her marriage to Horace Richardson Jr. at Oak Grove Baptist Church in Lawrenceville on Thanksgiving Day 1958. In 1963, the Richardsons welcomed a daughter, Renita Charmelle Richardson, to their family. After maternity leave, Mrs. Richardson began teaching at J. Andrew Bowler Elementary School in Richmond.

Her academic achievement in earning her Master of Education degree at the University of Virginia in 1967 so impressed her adviser that he asked her to remain to pursue a doctorate. Mrs. Richardson, mindful of her 4-year-old daughter's needs, told him that being a good mother was more important to her than working on her doctorate, the email stated.

With busing to achieve desegregation of schools, she was assigned to Maury-Bainbridge Middle School. During the early 1970s, when the Richmond schools set up an ethnic studies center, Mrs. Richardson became the one designated to teach about West Africa.

Urged to become an administrator, she always declined, preferring to teach. Her final assignment was at George Washington Carver Elementary School, where she was named Richmond's Teacher of the Year before retiring.

Besides her professional memberships, she was active in her church, having joined Fourth Baptist Church in the early 1960s. She was a member of the R Group, was one of the early female deacons, and served as president of the Business and Professional Women's Circle.

She served as basileus of Sigma Gamma Rho, which named her Woman of the Year. She worked to raise money for the sorority's J.C. Byrd Memorial Scholarship Committee.

Mrs. Richardson also had been a member of the Eastview Civic League and the Richmond Chapter of the Saint Paul's College National Alumni Association.

In her family, she shared what she had learned with siblings and encouraged

her brothers and sisters to achieve academic excellence and helped them financially to gain their education. Their success against great odds and their efforts to better their community resulted in the Joneses being named National Black Family of the Year in 1994 during an annual summit and award program sponsored by the College of Social Work at the University of South Carolina and the Columbia, S.C., Urban League.

She captured family events on film and scrapbooked family photos. Her father often referred to her home as “the headquarters,” the email stated.

She liked to work in leather and made belts and wallets for family members. She often invited elderly people to share a meal.

Her excellent people skills helped her to act as a peacemaker, and she often would counsel those at odds with each other to take “the high road.”

She was the widow of Horace Richardson Jr.

Survivors include a daughter, Renita Kennedy of Austin, Texas; a sister, Eula Virginia Jones of Richmond; six brothers, Earl Lee Jones and Milton Ray Jones, both of Richmond, Dr. Lloyd Conway Jones of Glen Allen, Marvin Curtis Jones Sr. of Mechanicsville, Dr. Stanley Poindexter Jones of Springfield and Roy Parnell Jones of Sandston; and three grandchildren.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR 19. 11:00 AM (ET)

Fourth Baptist Church
2800 P Street
Richmond, VA 23223

Tribute Wall



“ *Ella Ruth Jones Richardson*

October 13, 2022 at 08:33 AM



“ *Mrs. Richardson was my teacher in elementary school and was such a nurturing and caring person. She was an exceptional educator who instilled in me a love of learning and a strong sense of self. One of my favorite memories was when she invited her friend to visit our class to talk to us about Africa. This friend had visited the continent and was successful in opening the world to us, taking us "beyond the physical classroom". It was due to that experience that I vowed to visit Africa and made that visit 20+ years later.*

Another memory was of me, on many occasions, tucking a book in my lap under the desk and reading during class. When caught not paying attention Mrs. Richardson arranged for me to work, under the direction of our librarian, as a library helper. Instead of squelching my interest and fussing at me she directed me in a manner that was so very positive, in a way that had lasting influences on my life. I later went to college and chose librarianship as my career.

Mrs. Richardson was one of those teachers who "gave her all" to her students and taught us to be our best selves. Thank you for sharing her with so many and heaven has received an angel.

Please accept my condolences at her passing, and take comfort in knowing that she was an exceptionally special woman.

*Dianne Jones Jackson
djackson1262@gmail.com*

Dianne Jones Jackson - March 18, 2016 at 10:46 AM



“ We the March Family and Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

March Funeral Homes - March 12, 2016 at 07:29 PM