



Verna Mae Cann

February 1, 1933 - August 27, 2014

This is my story, this is my song ~
Praising my Savior all the day long.

Verna Mae Peacock Cann was born on February 1, 1933, in Durham, North Carolina, daughter of the late Christine Smith Peacock and the late James Otis Peacock. She departed this life on August 27, 2014. She was preceded in death by her only son, Johnny Lee Bryant.

Verna was educated at Durham public schools and also attended the Mary Potter Academy boarding school during her high school years. Although her education was interrupted when she moved to Baltimore at age 16, she persevered through many personal challenges and obstacles to continue her education. At age 28, she obtained her high school diploma after completing "evening school" at Baltimore City College; at age 40, she received her Associate of Arts degree after completing general and computer education courses from then Community College of Baltimore; and at age 62, after being encouraged by her daughter to take advantage of free tuition for seniors at state colleges and universities, she applied to and was accepted in the Fine Arts Program at the University of Maryland Baltimore County where she completed two years towards her B.F.A. degree.

After earning her high school diploma, Verna began working in secretarial and administrative positions in various Baltimore private and public agencies including the YMCA and the Department of Housing and Community

Development. She was later employed in a supervisory position at the Maryland State Department of Social Services (DSS) where she retired after 25 years of service. During her rise through the administrative ranks of DSS, she often remarked about the irony that she was working as a supervisor in the very department where she had applied for public assistance for herself and her two young children during an especially difficult season of her early life.

Verna met and married Raymond Freeman Cann in 1952. Shortly after the birth of their daughter, Linda, Verna met Mabel Williams (later Mabel Bennett Smith) who ministered to her and invited her to St. John Alpha and Omega Pentecostal Church (then located on Smallwood Street) where the late Right Reverend Magdalene Phillips was the pastor and founder. At St. John, she recommitted her life to Christ and found the place where she belonged. She joined the church in 1956. From then until the time of her passing, she filled many roles in the local church and in the national Alpha and Omega Pentecostal Church of America, Inc., including: Director of the St. John Senior Choir, National Chorus, and National Youth Chorus; President of the Young People's Holiness Union (Y.P.H.U.); Teacher in the St. John Sunday School; Camp Counselor at Camp Alpha Omega; President of the St. John Prayer Band; Trustee Member of the St. John and National Trustee Boards; Member of the Universal Prayer Band; and Founding Director of the St. John Video Ministry. Verna was inseparable from her two best friends, the late Mother Mabel "Mehta" Smith and Mother Ozetta "Zett" Wilkins. She also served as a confidante and long-time personal assistant to Alpha and Omega Pentecostal Church Founder and National President, the late Rt. Rev. M. Phillips, whom she selflessly served and with whom she lived for 14 years.

Verna was a woman of considerable and varied gifts and talents. As a child, Verna sang with her family's chorale, the Charity Singers, who were well known throughout the Durham, North Carolina, area and were often joined on stage by the young Shirley Caesar. She wrote several gospel songs, including "He Will Set Your Soul on Fire" and "Boys/Girls of Alpha & Omega Marching."

Her singing was powerful and she was well-known for her contralto that needed no microphone, especially when raising signature songs such as “Rise Up Shepherds and Follow” and “God Specializes.” She wrote and produced multiple plays, including Tom Thumb Weddings that involved the church’s children and youth, which were performed in church settings as well as many public settings. She was a commercial and fine artist who created drawings, signs, and paintings using varied media, including a wooden wall mural of angels that graced the second floor of the church’s former edifice on Smallwood Street and a painted mural that adorned the sanctuary of St. Luke Alpha and Omega Church in St. Augustine, Florida. She was an entrepreneur, creating and selling pottery and wood crafts. She was also a gifted seamstress and quilter; she sewed many garments and vestments for the Rt. Rev. M. Phillips and created her daughter’s wedding dress as well as several highly detailed quilts for family and friends. Verna’s favorite position was behind the camera: she was a conscientious videographer, video producer, and editor who received several Cameo Awards from the Baltimore Cable Access Corporation for her work. She was generous with her talents and gained much joy from teaching others how to create art. During the last two years of her life, she became a published illustrator; her original acrylic paintings are featured in the children’s picture book, *Every Child Is Gifted*, published by Liberty University Press.

Verna could get along with anyone. Perhaps because of her often difficult experiences in life, she never looked down on anyone and she pulled no punches in speaking the truth to try to prevent young people from forgetting God and making destructive decisions. She was passionate about defending the vulnerable and weak, particularly children. Her friendliness and authenticity endeared her to many and, in wisdom, she counseled, encouraged, and led many individuals to receive Jesus Christ in their lives. The grand theme of Verna’s life was love. She expressed her love by giving. She was known everywhere for her “goody bags,” little sacks filled with

peppermint candy, raisins, applesauce, granola bars, Donald Duck orange juice, and other snacks. Children and adults alike knew that “Sister Cann” always had something in her humongous tote bag for them, whether they had been naughty or nice. Goody bags always came with a kiss and a “hug around the neck.” In this simple way, Verna spread love wherever she went. Even her doctors, nurses, and other care professionals came to discover how special she was, especially when she became one of the few individuals to ever be “kicked out of hospice” when God miraculously extended her life. On Wednesday, August 27, 2014, accompanied by family in a quiet room at Sinai Hospital, she slipped into the presence of Jesus after having a precious opportunity to receive visits from many who loved her.

She leaves many to cherish her memory, including one daughter, Dr. Linda Frances Gorham, one son-in-law, James Arthur Gorham; three brothers, James Bobby Peacock (Sarah), Randolph Peacock (Albertena), Richard Peacock (Patricia); two sisters, Anita Peacock and Phyllis Perry (Isaiah); three grandchildren, Dr. Joy Pauline Gorham Hervey, Nathan Bryant Gorham, and Daniel James Gorham; one grandson-in-law, Dr. Eurmon Hervey, Jr.; one granddaughter-in-law, Keiona Gorham; five great-grandchildren, Emmanuel James Hervey, Trinity Vernelle Hervey, Glorya Imani Gorham, Grace Brielle Gorham, and Joshua Christopher James Gorham; two godchildren, Samuel Thomas and Marie Mitchell; a dear friend, Mother Ozetta Wilkins; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and extended family including adopted daughters and grand-children. Whether related by blood or not, Verna was everyone’s grandmother and a respected mentor to many. May we all seek to live out the best parts of her – her creativity, her lifelong learning, her love for God and His church, her generosity, her heart for the least of these, and her devotion to caring for family, friends, and strangers alike.

“For now we see in a mirror indirectly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, just as I have been fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.” I Corinthians 13:12-13 (New English Translation)

In lieu of flowers, the deceased desired that donations be made to the St. John Alpha and Omega Pentecostal Church Ministry of Video and Photography (MVP), 1950 W. North Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21217.

Cemetery Details

Arbutus Memorial Park Cemetery

1101 Sulphur Spring Road
Baltimore, MD 21227

Previous Events

Public Viewing

SEP 2. 1:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Homes - West Baltimore
4300 Wabash Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21215
(410) 542-2400
info@marchfh.com

Family Hour

SEP 2. 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Homes - West Baltimore
4300 Wabash Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21215
(410) 542-2400
info@marchfh.com

Wake

SEP 3. 6:00 PM - 6:30 PM (ET)

St. John Alpha & Omega Pentecostal Church
1950 W. North Avenue
Baltimore, MD

Service

SEP 3. 6:30 PM (ET)

St. John Alpha & Omega Pentecostal Church
1950 W. North Avenue
Baltimore, MD

Tribute Wall



“ *Verna Mae Cann*

October 13, 2022 at 08:33 AM



“ *Verna Mae made a lasting impression on me. I met Verna Mae a few times when she visted NC. She is my father's oldest sister. My father is very fond of her, and always spoke highly of Verna Mae. When I spoke with her, I felt her warmth and love. I'm also a social worker. I been thinking of her lately. --Jocelyn Peacock*

Jocelyn Peacock - December 28, 2016 at 10:09 PM



“ *Wow what an awesome soul Mrs. Cann. I was thinking about her and decided to look her up . I had no idea Mrs. Cann had passed. I was her Mail lady when she lived on Monastery Ave. She was so kind and loving. I never missed the opportunity to listen to her talk about God because of her Praying with and for me I returned back to Church. Love you Mrs. Cann💋*

Kathy Lewis - May 24, 2016 at 10:49 PM



“ *Linda and family: I was sorry to hear of Verna's passing. I enjoyed her calls and emails over the last few years. She was a wonderful person. Edith Cutler*

Edith Cutler - September 23, 2014 at 10:40 AM

CA

“ Sorry for your loss, may Jehovah give you comfort in your time od need. 1Corinthians 1:3,4. www.jw.org

Carolyn - September 08, 2014 at 05:30 PM

BB

“ I only met this lady once, but it felt like I knew her for a much longer time. Not only did I take to her passion, I admired her for having the same name as my mom. Yes Verna Mae was my Mother's name and somehow I felt I had two Moms. Rest in peace for you will never be forgotten.

Bobby Bland, friend of her cousin James Geer.

Bobby Bland - September 06, 2014 at 11:38 AM

PR

“ Words can't explain how much I am going to miss . Your words of wisdom has helped me get out of situations . Sometimes you knew things before I would tell you. You are and always will be dear to my heart . Love you god mommy.

Princess - September 02, 2014 at 03:09 PM

 Sean Townes

“ I remember when I was very young and being home schooled by my mom, Sister Cann taught me art and that was always the highlight of my week. May God be with such a loving woman.

Sean Townes - September 01, 2014 at 06:42 PM

KP

“ I remember how she was always trying to take care of us while we were taking care of her

Kathryn Poehlet - September 01, 2014 at 06:15 PM

WT

“ *I remember how she always had that video camera in her hand recording every thing*

William Townes - September 01, 2014 at 05:05 PM

PA

“ *Miss Verna...a true woman of God..we love u..rest on, we will see you in the great gettin up morning..Harold and Pam*



Pam - August 30, 2014 at 03:26 PM



“ *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 - August 29, 2014 at 04:21 PM