



Verna P. Dickerson

December 14, 1928 - June 22, 2007

Life Epitaph Verna Louise Powell was born December 14, 1928 in New Orleans, Louisiana; her parents were the late Benjamin Gordon Powell and the late Lucille Remy Powell. Verna was charming and engaging even as a child. She excelled in school and also loved music. She played the clarinet and occasionally teamed with her brother to sing duets at church, especially during visits to their large extended family in Mississippi. At age 7, when her father died unexpectedly, Verna took on responsibility for helping her mother care for three younger siblings. It was from her mother and aunt Salina, who came to live with the family that Verna learned to provide great New Orleans cooking and hospitality, and to show impeccable social graces and manners. After initially attending the Craig School, she was accepted at and ultimately graduated from Saint Mary's Academy graduating early at age 15. Her graduation quote in the yearbook was "the law of nature is that a certain quantity of work is necessary to produce a certain quantity of good." Verna was well-liked, and kept in touch with friends from her girlhood for her entire life. Upon graduating from high school, Verna was admitted to Xavier University (XU), New Orleans. The co-ed had her choice of many admirers, and one day met an XU student who would become the love of her life, Walter M. Dickerson (now deceased). He was a little older, having first served in the United States Army during WWII; a track team member, Walter was known to all as "Speedy." Verna graduated with a degree in Business Administration in 1949, the first time that major was offered, then went off to graduate school at

Southern University. Many XU alums came to know Verna from her work in the registrar's office between 1949 and 1955. In 1956, she and Walter married at St. Peter Claver Catholic Church, and purchased a house near Lake Pontchartrain. Upon becoming certified in elementary education, Verna taught in the New Orleans public school system beginning in 1956 and until 1969. She was known for urging her classes to do their best irrespective of circumstances; many former students contacted her throughout her life to tell her how she had positively influenced them. Verna and Speedy were members of St. Gabriel the Archangel Church, and their union was blessed with five daughters: Lisa, Terri, Patrice, Laurie and Verna. The family's move to Silver Spring Maryland precipitated a career change; Verna initially performed social work for Montgomery County. When the population burgeoned, the County Executive appointed her to pilot an effort by which residents would better access and utilize county resources. That program became permanent under her leadership, and she rose to Director, Information and Referral Services. Among many other awards and citations, she was recognized for leadership by Federal Executive Women. Verna lived to the fullest, and traveled to many countries, especially in Africa and Europe, and all across the United States for business and with family and friends. Until the time of her illness, Verna was an active member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, and Alpha Wives of Montgomery County (of which she was a founding member). She also helped to charter an investment club, Sisters Investing Seriously (SIS). She worked avidly with the legislative network for the Washington Archdiocese Social Justice Program, lobbying and testifying before the state legislature in Annapolis. She lived her life in service to God, and from 1969 until the time of her death, she was a member of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church where she was a lector, and established the Hospitality Greeting Ministry. Verna was quintessentially a wife and mother, loved by and tightly bonded with her husband and daughters. She appreciated God's blessings: time with her family and friends, playing bridge, traveling, theater, good books, jazz, great food, and fun people. She visited others often, and loved to host

gatherings at her home accented by her savory, authentic New Orleans dishes. She was loving and effervescent, known for an irrepressible positive spirit, generosity and quick wit. She knew and loved Christ, embraced life, and laughed often. In addition to her five devoted daughters, she leaves to cherish her memory one grandson, Clifton D. Jones Jr., three granddaughters, Lauren D. and Michael D. Tucker and Jordan C. Dickerson, a brother, Benjamin G. Powell, two sisters, June A. Brown and Elizabeth T. McCrowey, a son-in-law, Theodore V. Holtzclaw, a brother-in-law, F. Gilbert McCrowey, and a multitude of friends and relatives.

LAGNIAPPE: VERNA'S GUMBO

2 cups chopped celery, chopped 1 ½ cups red, green, or yellow peppers, chopped 1 ½ cups onion, chopped 4 cloves minced garlic 2 small bunches shallots, chopped 2 pounds of shrimp, peeled, de-veined and "dusted" with 3 TBSPs flour 4-5 cups stock from one boiled chicken 1 pound smoked sausage (cut into small pieces). May substitute or combine with hot sausage for spiciness. 6 blue crabs broken in half or 12 oz lump crab meat Old Bay Seasoning, Salt, Pepper, ¼ cup parsley, 3 Bay Leaves, 1-2 tsp. File ϕ to taste You will need at least 1 cast iron skillet and a large stock pot. In the skillet, heat 3 TBSPs oil. Sautee vegetables, turning until medium brown. Don't rush the cooking. Transfer to large stock pot. Sautee sausage in skillet until brown. Transfer to stock pot. (Wash and dry skillet completely for the next step.) Heat ¼ cup oil. Let heat thoroughly. Sprinkle in 6 TBSPs flour to make a roux (thickened base). Stir constantly until medium brown. Add chicken stock and water to desired consistency. Add to stock pot. Add bay leaves, chicken stock, parsley, salt, pepper and Old Bay to desired taste and consistency. Bring to a boil, then lower heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Add crab meat. Add File ϕ to thicken, but do not boil after it is added. Sautee shrimp until transparent. Don't over cook. Set aside. Just before serving, add shrimp. Serve in bowls over rice. Makes 12 servings.

Verna's tip: I've always thought that either you're measuring or you're cooking, so I do not measure. This is not an exotic dish, rather it is usually made from what's available; a little of this, and a little of

that. Substitute other ingredients that you like, such as oysters, okra or chicken. Better to be generous. And examine your ingredients first because one bad item can spoil your whole pot ... that's a good lesson for life.

Tribute Wall



“ Verna P. Dickerson

March 25, 2023 at 10:25 AM



“ Verna P. Dickerson

October 13, 2022 at 08:33 AM



“ I am sorry to learn about the death of Verna. I'm sure that this must have been a difficult time for all of you. I am forwarding scripture that will comfort you. Psalm 90:10 says that the usual human life span is 70 or 80 years. This was true when Moses wrote it but not so from the beginning. (compare Genesis 5:3-32.) Hebrew 9:27 says...It is reserved for men to die once for all time. This, too, was true when it was written but not the case before God passed judgement on sinful Adam.##imported-begin##JT
Nunnally##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Hello ! Dickerson's ! I would like to express my fellow feeling to you all in your circle of life being broken 8 months ago. It is wonderful to have others care and express their love. Our heavenly father is there to as your refuge, Ps.46:1-2. and strenght.Imagine the great joy to our when the dead are raised to life again as the bible say at John 5:28 as Jesus calls. I am looking forward to that time coming in the near future. May all of Ms. Verna accomplishment and cherished memories and great cooking of meals support your all in life journey ahead.##imported-begin##Lillian Crosby##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ May the true God Jehovah comfort you during this painful time. When people lose a loved one in death they wonder, will I ever see my loved one again? Thankfully we have the wonderful promise of the ressurection made possible through the ransom sacrifice of our Savoieur, Christ Jesus. When he was on earth he brought many back to life, including Lazarus and a 12-year old girl. The scriptures say that her parents were filled with joy and ecstasy when she opened her eyes again. Mark 5:38-43. On occasion Jehovah even allowed humans to perform ressurections as in the case of the prophet Elisha; who raised a little boy back to life. 2nd Kings 4:17-19 and 32-37. These real life accounts help us to see how real the ressurection is, as well as how loving Jehovah is to make it possible for the dead to live again. John 5:28,29 tells us, "Donot marvel at this, because the hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out." I pray that these scriptures bring some comfort to your hearts, as well as helping you to cope in the days ahead.##imported-begin##R Johnson##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Please accept my sincere sympathy for your loss. Despite the pain, you may find comfort in the Christian hope of the resurrection. Jesus said at John 11:25: "...I am the resurrection and the life. He that excercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life." Yes, we can have the strongest confidence that the dead can live again.##imported-begin##A. Robinson##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Just a note from the Guy Family to say God bless and congratulations to the family for the honor and love displayed throughout the life of your Mom and Dad. Douglas Johannesburg South Africa##imported-begin##Douglas Guy##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ The Dickerson Family, "We know life's never measured by how many years we live, But by the kindly things we do and the happiness we give." Helen Steiner Rice I will always remember your mother's kindness,smile,& love.##imported-begin##Mrs. Claudette Diggs##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Yesterday, I attended the going away services for a very dear Friend (Verna Dickerson) . Vern was a native of New Orleans and a renown Cajun/creole cook. Over the years I have tasted Her version of gumbo and I always wanted to ask Her for Her recipe. I never had the nerve to request it. Well, yesterday She gave it to Me. Her recipe was included in the program passed out at Her going away services. I have taken it upon my self to share the recipe with all of you. A few of You know Vern as the Wife of the late Walter Dickerson. I hope that all of you enjoy Vern's recipe and that You will think of Her as You enjoy it. Bon Appetite Fred Rose PS: the above, is the body of an email that was sent out today. The Family requested that I post it on this site.##imported-begin##Fred f Rose##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ To My Sorors Dickersons, Your mother was such a comfort to me when I lived in Baltimore and D.C. I know you all know how blessed you were to have her as your mom but I was blessed even more when she and each of you opened your home and hearts to me. You are forever in my prayers. Cynthia Buggage Donaldsonville, LA.##imported-begin##Cynthia M. Buggage##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM



“ Mama Verna, my East Coast Mom, you will forever be in my heart. Your legacy will go on in your beautiful and talented daughters, as well as your wonderful grandchildren. My heart goes out to all of you. I'll miss you dearly.##imported-begin##Cecily Vallot##imported-end##

July 02, 2010 at 02:21 PM