

## Obituary

Monday, February 25, 1929 was the day God graced the world with an angel named, Helen Marie Taylor Powell. Her journey began in the small town of Glen, Jean, W.Va., born to the late George Harrison and Mae Fairfax Taylor. Born the youngest of four, her mom passed when she was six months old.

She was then raised by her father and maternal grandparents. One of whom was William Fairfax, the first black Deputy Sheriff of Fayette County who shaped her sense of civil service. As a coal miner's daughter she began her activism at the age of 15, when her father was disabled in the coal mines. She helped him win compensation for his injury and eventually his retirement pension. As a result, she began helping other local mining families receive their benefits as well. Helen intuitively began a life of service to others. Serving as the President of the State and National Black Lung Association, she helped organize the Breath of Life, an association for black (coal), brown(iron), and white(asbestos) lung victims. She along with others drafted the 1972 Amendments to the Federal Black Lung Bill that made it possible for thousands of Black Lung victims and their families in the state of West Virginia to receive benefits and compensation.

Her father's commitment to God and the First Baptist Church of Glen Jean inspired her life-long servitude to God and the First Baptist Church of Glen Jean. At the age of 12, she gave her life to Christ and served in multiple church ministries as Clerk, Treasurer, Superintendent, Sunday School Teacher, Secretary, and the Kitchen Committee. Her cooking ability was a testament of her love as any of us who ate her home cooked meals (rolls and fried chicken especially) could give a witness (hallelujah)!

Helen graduated from DuBois High School, Mount Hope, W.Va., at the age of 15. Instead of attending college, she became the primary caregiver for her ailing father and sister but found time for correspondence courses and became a certified paralegal. One of her quotes was "what you get in your head, nobody can take away". In May 1998 she received an Honorary Doctorate from West Virginia University Institute of Technology.

- Helen's accomplishments are too numerous to list, but here are highlights of her extraordinary life:
- Appalachian Research and Defense Fund (now called Legal Aid), Board Member
- West Virginia Rainbow Coalition, Treasurer
- Board of Southern Appalachian Labor School, Chair
- Board of the New River Family Health Center, Board Member
- Organized the Disabled Miner's and Widows Association and worked with the United Mine Workers Association to lobby congress and President Nixon and got the Federal Black Lung Bill passed in 1972 which evolved into the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OSHA)

During the Civil Rights Movement, in 1963 she marched with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Atlanta and Washington DC and subsequently rallied the Appalachian community around civil rights. Along with her children, she was the owner and operator of The Ritchie and Johnson Funeral Parlor.

Helen's most precious accomplishment however, was raising two amazing children, Leonard "Lemmie" Tyrone (Louise) Powell and Cheryl Patrice Powell; cherished grandmother of two lovely children, Lindsay Michelle Powell and Leonard Tyrone "Ty" Powell; great-grandmother of adorable, Marleigh K; second mom to distinguished Retired Marine Chief Warrant Officer 5, Robin Jerome Gore; beloved aunt and "second mom" to Clarence Edward Taylor Jr. "Stumpy", Shirley Ophelia Scott, Curtis Delano Meadows, and Charles Robert Taylor; revered great-aunt of Lucretia Marie "her namesake", Tamara "Tammy", Charles "Buddy" (deceased), Troy, Curtis Jr., Howard II, James, Pierre, Nicole, Juan, Pam, Anthony and Lakeshia.

In addition to her parents, Helen was preceded in death by her daughter, Ophelia Lynette (stillborn); siblings brother, William "Bill" (wife, Zetta), sister, Alberta "Bert", brother, Clarence "CE" (wife, Lucinda) and grandparents, aunts, uncles and numerous cousins.

## The Order of Service

*Master of Ceremonies* --- --- --- *Rev. Eugeno Nabors*

Processional	"Yes, God is Real"	
Selection	"May the Work I've Done Speak for Me"	
Scripture:	Old Testament	Rev. David F. Allen
	New Testament	Bishop Fred T. Simms
Prayer		Evangelist Janet Hairston
Selection	"Precious Lord"	
Acknowledgement of Condolences		Sis. Vanessa Woodson
Obituary		Sis. Eartha Bradford
Remarks	"two minutes each, please"	Rev. William R. Stevens
		Lucretia M. Scott
		Dr. John David
		Dr. Chara Freeman
		Nicole M. Scott
		Retired Marine CWOS Robin J. Gore
Selection	"Wind Beneath My Wings"	
Eulogy		Elder James Denson
Recessional	"Lead Me, Guide Me"	



You are not forgotten "Loved one", nor will you ever be,  
As long as life and memory lasts, we will remember thee.  
We will miss you now, our hearts are sore,  
As time goes by we will miss you more.  
Your loving smile, your gentle face,  
No one can take your place.

Although it is difficult to list Helen's many great contributions because her life's tapestry has been woven with many colors including:

- Field Representative and Board Member of the Appalachian Research and Defense Fund
- Treasurer of the WVA Welfare Rights Organization Welfare Rights Movement
- Treasurer of the Council of the Southern Mountains
- Mountaineer Family Health Clinic - Benefits Counselor 1972-1980
- Taught courses in Health and Human Services at Antioch College in Beckley
- Selected to represent WV on the national Board of Congress of Neighborhood Women based in NY
- One of three women chosen to go to the Netherlands and Germany to organize women and to discuss non-traditional jobs for women
- Winner of the 1994 \$12,500 Resourceful Women Award, donating \$7,500 to Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker Project of New River Health Association
- 1993 "Hats Off" Award from the WV Section of the National Council of Jewish Women
- Featured in "Women of Southern Appalachia", an Exhibition of Photographs at the Smithsonian Institution, Museum of American History - March 1 - October 26, 1997
- Witnessed the I Have a Dream Speech in Washington, DC and met MLK Jr. and his family
- Received the West Virginia State MLK "Living the Dream Award"
- Honored by National Council of Jewish Women and the National Organization of Women
- Held certificates in Leadership Development, Peer Counseling, Home Health, and Paralegal
- Southern Appalachian Labor School, Chairperson
- United Mine Workers Association, trained miners and widowers in Black Lung Law
- She was the oldest member of the First Baptist Church of Glen Jean, over 74 years

" My Time To Leave "

I know it will be difficult since I'm no longer there;  
But I know how much I was loved and the time we had was dear.  
I know it will be hard at first when you remember me;  
Reading or just drinking a cup of tea.

My prayer is that you will soon see that your grief will fade with time;  
But the priceless time you shared with me, those memories are yours and mine.  
There was so much sin and darkness in the world as I passed through;  
Many challenges I could not face, many things I could not do.

But when I got to heaven I left behind my pain and fears;  
I conquered all the struggles I fought throughout the years.  
Now that I've gone to heaven don't cry for me down there;  
I'm walking with my savior so don't shed a single tear.

I'm singing with the angels walking the streets of gold;  
Living in my heavenly home, never to grow old.  
Now that I'm in heaven and have seen my master's face;  
I'll live forever in the light of his amazing grace.

I'm with those who came before me, all my loved ones;  
In this land where there is no night, my work on earth is done.  
I'm walking with my loved ones, hand in hand, step by step;  
I told them how I missed them every second after they left.  
I love all of you, my family don't be sad and do not grieve;  
I'll wait for you at heaven's gate, it was just my time to leave.



God saw you were getting tired  
And a cure was not to be  
So he put his arms around you  
And whispered, " COME WITH ME "

With tearful eyes we watched you  
And saw you pass away  
Although we loved you dearly  
We could not make you stay.

A heart of gold stopped beating  
Your hard working hands put to rest  
God broke our heart to prove to us  
He only takes the best.



Entombment

Greenwood Memorial Park  
Beckley, WV

Pallbearers

Leonard T. Powell II Robin J. Gore Juan Taylor Howard Scott II  
Howard Scott III Nicolas Taylor Scott

Flower bearers

Family and Friends

\*\*\*\*\*Dinner for family and friends will be served at Heart of God Ministries  
1703 So. Kanawha St. Beckley, WV immediately following the committal  
service.

Acknowledgement

We would like to graciously thank everyone for their personal and  
collective prayers, cards, and notes of comfort. We express gratitude to  
everyone of you for being a part of the wonderful life's  
journey of our dear loved one. May you, your family, and loved ones be  
blessed for your kindness and compassion.

The Family of Helen Marie Taylor Powell

Care and sympathetic considerations have been extended to this family

through the services that have been provided by:

Ritchie B. Johnson Funeral Parlor, Inc.

748 So Fayette St. Beckley, WV 25801

304.252.4115 • Fax: 304.252.6061 • 304.465.5687

Email address: [ritchie-johnson@suddenlinkmail.com](mailto:ritchie-johnson@suddenlinkmail.com)

Leonard T. Powell, Licensee-in-charge • Cheryl Powell-Jarrett, Licensed Mortician



*A Service of Memory*  
-- Celebrating the Life --  
of

*Helen Marie Taylor Powell*



Earthly Life Began

February 25, 1929

Eternal Life Began

May 5, 2015

"Everyone has the power for greatness, not for fame but greatness,  
because greatness is determined by service." Martin Luther King Jr.

Services

1:00PM Wednesday, May 13, 2015  
First Baptist Church of Glen Jean  
469 Collins Hill Road  
Glen Jean, WV 25846

Officiating

Elder James Denson  
Rev. Eugene Nabors

