



Thelma McArthur

August 21, 1929 - April 3, 2020

My name is Thelma Marcella Wheeler McArthur. Some of my friends call me “Thelma Mac” but my family calls me “Mother” and “Mother Dear”. I was born on August 21, 1929 in the house on 1643 East Monument Street in Baltimore, Maryland to Mabel Wheeler and Shirley Wheeler. I had an older half-sister, Irma and an older half-brother Vincent and my little brother, John Wheeler was born 5 years later. As a child, I played with Bernice Sales and other kids in the neighborhood. “When Bernice’s mother would call her home, I would go home”. I liked to go to the movies and see westerns.

Among the children in the neighborhood, I made friends with a family called the McArthurs. They lived on 1414 Ashland Avenue before they moved to 1405 Eager Street. Ashland Avenue was a 5 minute walk—just walk down Monument Street, turn right on North Caroline Street and left at Ashland Avenue and you were there. Eager Street, a 10 minute walk. I knew the McArthurs because my friend Audrey Kess had introduced me to a girl named Jean who lived on Ashland Avenue and on the same street as the McArthurs. I then became friends with Annie McArthur, who was the sister of Sandy McArthur. Little did I know that Sandy would later become my husband of 52 years and Jean would become my sister-in-law.

Sandy and I both went to Dunbar Middle School and High School. What did I like about him? Well I was a loud mouth and he was quiet so I guess opposites attract. I read that our horoscopes, Leo and Libra complemented each other. Sandy and I had become a couple and his little brother James and my friend Jean were a couple. But you didn’t say you were boyfriend or girlfriend at the time. We were just “Thelma and Sandy”.

I graduated from Dunbar in 1948. I went straight from high school and started working at

Social Security Administration (SSA)

in 1948. Again, little did I know that I would be at SSA for 40 years. I always said “I didn’t come here to make friends, I came here to make money!”. But, I did make many lifelong friends at SSA, including my friend Dani and others.

After graduation, Sandy enlisted in the Koren War and came home in 1951. Around this time, all of my friends started to get married, so I told Sandy, “I want to get married too!” One day, as I was walking back home from work, the people in the neighborhood started coming up to me excited, saying “you know Sandy is going to marry you.” I got married on May 13, 1951 on 1405 Eager Street— the McArthur family home where we spent so much of our time together.

We saved up to buy a house and in 1953, we bought a house at 2319 Harlem Avenue, where I would stay for 67 years. I brought my mother, Mabel, my little brother John and my aunt Ida to live with us. In 1956, I had my first child Sandy, Jr. In 1958, I had Brian, my second son. In 1960, I had my only daughter, Tamara Lynne. We all lived there together.

I had a great life. I don’t have a bucket list— If I wanted to do something or go somewhere, I saved up, worked overtime and I did it. At SSA, we had a group of friends who would travel together and I would also travel with a group started by my friends Cornish and Leroy and a group at the Southern Baptist Church, a church that the McArthurs were founders of. I went to Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Paris, Germany and Mexico, to name a few. I traveled to so many countries, cities and islands— but “once you’ve seen one island you’ve pretty much seen them all”.

I also had a group of friends called “We10”— lifelong friends and family, including my sister-in-law, Eather Mae and her husband, George, James and Jean, Anne and Stanley and Thelma and Sandy. We spent a lot of time together, raised our families together and also had parties and had a good time.

In 1982, my only daughter, Tamara, got married to her high school sweetheart Troy Johnson. In 1986, I had my first grandchild, Candice and in 1990, I had my second and last grandchild, Kristen. In 1988, I retired from SSA and had a fabulous retirement party. Around 1996, I started to watch both of my grandchildren and they came to live with me. My full-time job from then on

was to be their “Mother Dear”. I called them my “capookas” or “pookas” for short, or my “pookalahs”. Then, my first and only great-grandchild, Tristen, was born in 2006. I called him my “smoo”, “smookie” or my “smookie moo”.

“Don’t ever forget my Tristen”.

I liked to make recipes from the McArthur cookbook— “you can make anything if you have the recipe”. I like to read romance novels— not the kind for marriage but the courting. I have high taste and high standards and I always think very highly of myself. Even as I got older, I still considered myself to be “27 years old”. I was never afraid to speak my mind, to be funny, witty and feisty. When my husband died in 2003, he told me, “what would I have done without you?” I told him “I only did what I was supposed to do.” Now, I can have peace, contentment, rest and go out in a crown of glory.

Cemetery

King Memorial Park Cemetery- Grand Heritage Chapel & Mausoleum

8710 Dogwood Rd.

Baltimore, MD, 21244

Events

APR **Wake** 10:30AM - 11:00AM

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March Life Tribute Center -
Randallstown

5616 Old Court Road,
Windsor Mill, MD, US