



Bessie Lucille Fennell

May 1, 1933 - August 5, 2020

Bessie Lucille Murrell (Fonville, Fennell) was born May 01, 1933 in Dover, North Carolina to Leamon Taft Murrell and Maggie Doris-Doyal Murrell. She transitioned peacefully home to be with the Lord on Wednesday, August 5, 2020.

Bessie was a faithful and active member of the St. John AME Turk Quarter Church in New Bern, North Carolina. Twenty-three years ago, she became a Deaconess of her church and was lovingly known as the mother of the church. At the age of seven, she was the first African American female to sing gospel on the radio. At the age of 22, she came to New York to be the back-up lead singer for Aretha Franklin. Unfortunately, she faced stage fright and returned back to North Carolina and continued to pursue her singing in her church choir. At the age of 23 she decided to leave her native land of North Carolina and moved to the city of Passaic, New Jersey, where she was employed by Beth Isreal Hospital as an LPN for 30 years.

Bessie was educated in the public school system of Dover, North Carolina. She went on to study nursing where she received her LPN Degree from William Paterson University. Shortly after retiring, she decided to pursue her true passion and enrolled in The Wolford Academy, in Newark, New Jersey and received her Cosmetology License in 1983. She worked as a hair stylist for many years at The Madonna Multinational Funeral Home and her own

practice. For the past 20 plus years, Bessie had relocated back to New Bern, North Carolina. She worked as a Senior Companion, The Hospice Group and Advocate for the elderly. Bessie loved making people smile and caring for others. She helped coordinate a Bible Study Group for the elderly people.

She was preceded in death by her mother, Maggie Doris Doyal-Murrell; her father, Leamon Taft Murrell; daughter, Maggie L. Mann-Montalvo; son, Leamon Lee Fennell; brother, Chester Murrell (Sarah); husband, Lee Pondia London Fennell, Jr.; husband, Johnnie Alton Fonville; aunt, Norma Ruth Murrell-Gaskins; sisters-in-law, Sarah Hunt, of Hinesville, G.A., Velma Enoch and Esther Fisher, of Washington, D.C.; brothers-in-law, Bryant Enoch, of Passaic, N.J., John Terry Fennell, of Hinesville, G.A..

She leaves to cherish her memory, one daughter, Minnie Esther Hiller-Cousins (Wilmont) of Passaic, N.J.; special niece, Angela Fennell of Passaic, N.J.; sisters-in-law, ElMarie Watts of Passaic, N.J.; Jean Clark (Thomas) of Willingboro, N.J.; Ruby Hawkins (Clarence) and Shirley Enoch, of Washington, D.C.; brothers-in-law, Raymond Enoch, of Washington, D.C.; John Enoch (Betty), of Clinton, M.D.; Harry Fennell, Sr. of Columbus, G.A., and Willard Fennell, of Hinesville, G.A.; three grandsons, Shondell Mann and Maurice T. Hiller, Sr. of New Bern, N.C. and Eric Montalvo (Monique) of San Diego, C.A.; three grand daughters, Sherese L. Hiller-Alston (John MaJeed, Sr.), Torise L. Hiller, of Passaic, N.J.; and Victoria C. Montalvo-Turley (Christopher) of San Diego, C.A.; seven great-grand children, Leamon, Maurice T. Hiller, Jr.; Assata M. Murray (Lamar), John Jr., and Jordan Alston of Passaic, N.J.; Rowan, Gavin Turley of San Diego, C.A.; special friends, Gwendolyn Bolton and Elmer Simmons, Jr., special caregiver, Gerald McBeth and a host of nieces, nephews, family members and other devoted friends.

Tribute Wall



“ *Bessie Lucille Fennell*

November 27, 2022 at 05:57 PM



“ *Miss Bessie was my client while I was attending nursing school. I will always remember her. I still think of her often.*

Laura Ann Wayne - August 18, 2021 at 04:39 PM



“ *Our deepest sympathies to the family of Bessie Fennell. I had the honor of meeting Bessie at her daughter, Minnie 's wedding. I admired her from that day on. I remember her as a stunning lady who could touch your heart, even for that one day. She raised a beautiful daughter, whom I have always admired. Minnie, thank you for sharing your mom with us. Kathleen Backer and family*

Kathleen Backer - August 15, 2020 at 10:03 AM



“ *I first met Ms Seal as she was affectionately known by many back in 1972 when I went to New Jersey to spend the summer with my aunt Sarah Murrell. She was a very classy lady and the last time I I visited with her she still was classy. Minnie you already know how I feel. You and your family are forever in my thoughts and prayersChristine MooreGrantsboro NC*

Christine Moore - August 07, 2020 at 06:38 PM