



Dr. Mary Thornton Phillips

July 9, 1932 - May 24, 2016

Dr. Mary Thornton Phillips died peacefully in her home, surrounded by family, in Los Angeles, California on the morning of May 24, 2016 at the age of 83. Dr. Phillips was born on July 9, 1932 in Bains, Louisiana of the union of Dudley Thornton and Alice Turnbull. She attended McDonogh #35 High School in New Orleans, Louisiana and was an Elementary Education Graduate of Xavier University. She received her M.S. in Elementary Supervision and Administration from Indiana University and a Ph.D. in Educational Administration from the University of Minnesota. She completed post-doctoral studies from Harvard University's Institute for Educational Management.

Dr. Phillips began to share her passion for education while student teaching in Orleans Parish. After completing her Masters Degree from Indiana University, she moved to St. Paul, Minnesota. She continued to teach kindergarten through grade eight and especially enjoyed working with young students with special needs. Dr. Phillips was driven to serve and have a larger impact on her community. She became Principal at LC Webster Elementary in North St. Paul while pursuing her post-graduate studies at the University of Minnesota and Harvard University. After completing her Ph.D., she became the first woman and first African American to be appointed Assistant Commissioner for Vocational-Technical Education for the State of Minnesota. Dr. Phillips also worked as the Vice Chancellor for Employee Relations, Instruction, and Student Affairs and Development for the Minnesota Community College

System. She served eight years in public office as Vice Chair and Chair of the St. Paul Board of Education, and retired as an education liaison with St. Paul Mayor Randy Kelly's office in 2003.

Dr. Phillips was the recipient of many academic and professional accolades. She was named a Bush Public School Executive Fellow and an Educational Policy Fellow. She was a strong, positive influence in many professional and community organizations. Dr. Phillips was on the Board of the United Way, Penumbra Theatre, the Bush foundation and the Wilder Foundation. She was on the Founding Committee of Minnesota Metropolitan State University and a member of the NAACP, the Urban League, the Limited Black Woman's Network, the American Association of University woman and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

Dr. Phillips was recognized for her work as a life-long learner, educator, administrator, feminist and tireless advocate for all students, especially students of color, students in poverty and students for whom English is a second language. She was known as a consensus builder, a strong, ethical community leader and championed quality education for all students.

Dr. Phillips retired to New Orleans in 2003 where she worked as a Professor at Southern University, New Orleans while serving on the Board of the Hume Child Development Center. She also became an active member of Cornerstone United Methodist Church.

Dr. Phillips moved to Los Angeles in 2005 after Hurricane Katrina. She was a committed, loving mother to her four children, with whom she resided until her death.

Dr. Phillips is survived by her four children, Gregory Phillips, Gerald Phillips, Jeffrey Phillips, and Jennifer Phillips Cook; her sister Elizabeth T. Green; four grandchildren, four great grandchildren; and a host of relatives and friends. All family, friends, and associates are invited to attend funeral services on Saturday June 4, 2016 at Cornerstone United Methodist Church, 5276 Bullard Ave. New Orleans, 70128. Visitation begins at 9:30, Service at 11am. Interment, Greenwood Cemetery and Mausoleum 5242 Canal Blvd, New

Orleans LA, 70124. Professional arrangements have been entrusted to DW Rhodes Funeral Home, 3933 Washington Ave.; Please visit www.rhodesfuneral.com to sign the guest book.

Cemetery Details

Greenwood Cemetery

5242 Canal Blvd
New Orleans, LA 70124

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN 4. 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Cornerstone United Methodist Church
5276 Bullard Ave.
New Orleans, LA 70128

Service

JUN 4. 11:00 AM (CT)

Cornerstone United Methodist Church
5276 Bullard Ave.
New Orleans, LA 70128

Tribute Wall

DE

“ I will always remember Aunt Mary as a shining lightwith such a beautiful spirit. 🌟



Deanie - June 09, 2016 at 09:40 PM

 Glynne Gervais

“ My prayers to the family on the passing of this talented and well loved woman. Glynne Gervais

Glynne Gervais - June 04, 2016 at 08:41 AM

KA

*A Poem for Aunt Mary
I closed my eyes as I wiped many tears from my face.
I will cherish all the memories deep within my heart.
Though these memories will never part. I will just keep wishing the pain would somehow stop.
I didn't get the chance to say my last goodbye.
I just didn't think you could ever die.
As I continue to close my eyes to wipe the tears from my face.
All of your love you have shown me, continues to resonate.
In my heart and in my mind I will never be alone.
For you Aunt Mary, you have been called to a greater home called HEAVEN.
Rest in peace.
I will love you until the end of time.....
Your niece,
Karen*

kay - June 09, 2016 at 10:40 AM

DE

So heartfelt and beautiful....

Deanie - June 09, 2016 at 09:23 PM

NB

I am only just finding this obituary as I was thinking of her today. Mrs. Phillips was my second grade teacher at Hayden Heights. She was a wonderful woman, superb teacher, and had a profound effect on my young life because she found ways to empower something in each child in that classroom. I went on to teach in the district years later. She was still deeply involved in education and I was so proud to have had her.

Nancy L Buennemeyer - January 21, 2021 at 10:10 PM