



Annie Foster

December 22, 2016

Life is amazing and our mother was amazing in her life! In a word, Annie R. Foster was FIESTY! She had always been a quiet storm. Even in her later years, she was known to threaten her caregivers with her cane if something was not to her liking. But she was also very much a lady...elegant, poised, intelligent, witty, fun loving and kind. EVERYONE who met her loved her. We were truly at awe as we witnessed how moved her caregivers were as they learned of her passing. We were so blessed to have an awesome example of a woman we could call Mom.

Annie was the first of George Thomas Reed and Estelle Hilda Robinson Reed's five children. She was born in the segregated city of Saluda, VA. As a child, Annie accepted Christ into her life while attending Antioch Baptist Church (VA). When not in school, Annie picked beans, scrubbed floors and washed dishes to assist with paying for books and other school supplies for herself and her siblings. It was during these early years that Annie was taught the value of education. You see, although Annie's mother was a very smart woman, Estelle had to leave school to support her younger brothers and sisters. As a result, Estelle vowed to "work her knuckles off to see that her children got at least a high school education."

Annie exceeded Estelle's goal as she received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Virginia Union and subsequently attended St. Phillips Nursing

School where she was the valedictorian of her graduating class. In regard to being valedictorian, Annie was later quoted as saying “other’s were brighter, but I worked harder!”. This was the essence of who Annie was...very determined...especially in regards to education. Throughout her entire life, she would ask EVERY young person that she came in contact with “Did you get that piece of paper? Do you have your degree?”

Following college, in 1958, Annie started working at Lankenau Medical Center in PA. She was the first African American registered nurse to work at the center. As such, she broke the color line and paved the way for many nurses that followed. Annie was extremely proud of this achievement and shared it with everyone that she came in contact with as a form of encouragement. Like we said, Annie was truly amazing! 1958 was a great year for Annie because on August 9th, Annie also married the love of her life, James Shephard Foster, aka “Shep”. Shep was Annie’s gentle giant. He had a calming spirit that matched perfectly with Annie’s feisty nature. Their marriage was an awesome example for their daughters, Vanessa Ann (1961) and Leavanna (Vanna) Renee (1970).

Annie and Shep lived in and around Philadelphia until 1970. During this time, they attended 59th Street Baptist Church and Annie worked as a public health nurse. But in their spare time, the couple enjoyed spending time with family and friends. It was not unusual to catch the couple playing a friendly game of pinnacle on the porch of their row house on a cool summer night. Annie was full of laughter and fun.

Determined to leave the increasingly “rough” streets of Philadelphia, the couple moved to the small town of Franklinville, NJ in 1970. Here Annie worked at Newcomb Hospital as a registered nurse and then began a career as a nursing professor at Cumberland County College (CCC) in 1973. Once again, Annie was one of the first African Americans to be part of the Nursing

Department staff. In addition to having numerous newspaper articles written about her varying achievements and receiving several awards, in 1987, Annie also played a major role in getting the CCC Nursing Program accredited. This was a huge accomplishment!

If all of this wasn't rewarding enough, Annie's students' loved her. One of the main reasons that they loved her so much was because she understood their struggles. Most of the students were working parents. They were juggling, school, work and home life. Annie, while in her early 50's, attended the University of Pennsylvania where she received her Master's Degree in nursing. So she too was juggling a life of responsibilities. In one of her newspaper articles, she was quoted as saying "Nursing is rough, and I'm a living example of what you can do if you want to do it bad enough. You have to be motivated. Consider your priorities. You may have to put forth two or three times the effort of the young bright student who has no family responsibilities." It is with this determined spirit that Annie taught her daughters that "If they can do it then you can do it too."

Now although Annie enjoyed her nursing profession immensely along with the love that her students displayed, nothing compared to the love that Annie had for her family...both immediate and extended. Just like her mother, Estelle, she taught her daughters to be strong, loving and educated..."beautiful inside as well as outside". They were Reed women! She spent time with them, supported them, shared with them. She also had fun with them...especially at Christmas time when the frantic kicking of her legs expressed her undeniable appreciation of a gift that she received.

Christmas was also a special time for Annie's famous butter cookies. Everyone in the immediate and extended family loved them. On rare occasions, these special cookies would also show up at one of the many family gatherings that Annie and Shep hosted. As the oldest of the five Reed

children, Annie was the matriarch once Estelle transitioned. She did everything that she could to keep the family united in the same manner that Estelle would have done. And education was still important. It was not uncommon for Annie and Shep to contribute to educational endeavors of one of their young nieces and nephews.

As time passed, Shep developed Alzheimer's disease and in 2007 the couple decided to move to Northern Jersey to be closer to Leavanna. One of the best side benefits to this move was that Annie and Shep were now closer to their younger grandchildren along with many members of their extended family. On June 25th, 2010, Shep transitioned due to complications from Alzheimer. Meanwhile, Annie had started developing dementia so she subsequently moved to California to live with Vanessa.

During her time with Vanessa, Annie began to insist on moving back to New Jersey so that she could be close to her younger grandchildren and siblings. She asked to go to an assistant living facility so that she would not burden her daughters. So in August of 2012, Annie moved to the Whispering Knolls Facility in Edison, New Jersey. In February 2016, she had her third encounter with cancer and had to undergo a second mastectomy. Her first mastectomy took place in 1986. When asked at that time whether she wanted to go through with the mastectomy, she said "Yes. My life vs my breast? That is an easy question. My breasts do not represent who I am." However, the cancer that returned in 2016 was a rare form. So at the late age of 83, Annie had to undergo daily radiation for 30 days in the summer of 2016. Although, as a result of her dementia, she didn't totally understand why she had to endure the treatment and therefore gave her caregivers a challenge at times, she was able to get through the radiation without any issues. But unfortunately, the cancer battle returned for a fourth time in August of 2016 and this time the doctors said that there wasn't a pathway to a cure. Leavanna and Vanessa were devastated to say the least. On October 25, 2016, Annie entered

hospice care and ultimately transitioned on December 22, 2016... with her daughters and family members by her side.

Annie was preceded in death by her husband, James "Shep" Foster, sister Evelyn Reed, and nephew John Walton, Jr. (Yolanda deceased). She is survived by two daughters Vanessa Dotson (Henry) and Leavanna "Vanna" Parker (Jarvis), two sisters Lucy Smith (Warnell deceased) and Edna Walton (John deceased) and one brother George A. Reed (Myisha). Annie is also survived by four grandchildren Samari Parker, Syrai Parker, Henry Dotson, IV and Talia Dotson along with seven nieces Debora Reed, Felecia Walton, Monica Smith, Wanda Roach (Todd deceased), Sandra Reed, Daphne Walton and Veda Smith; two nephews Terence Walton (Rhonda) and Craig Reed; along with a host of great nieces, nephews, family members and friends.

Previous Events

Visitation

DEC **30**. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (ET)

Ebenezer Baptist Church
126 Lee Avenue
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Service

DEC **30**. 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM (ET)

Ebenezer Baptist Church
126 Lee Avenue
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Tribute Wall



“ *Annie Foster*

September 22, 2022 at 02:41 PM



“ *I had the pleasure of working with Annie Foster in an outreach program sponsored by the American Cancer Society. What a special lady, full of pure love.*

Rosa McConner-Carr - June 27, 2018 at 10:23 PM