



Mrs. Gladys Fowler VanHook Watson

September 15, 1928 - December 26, 2022

On the early morning of December 26, 2022, angels from heaven gently accompanied Gladys Adell Fowler (VanHook) Watson on her journey to be with the Lord.

Her earthly journey began in Wayne County, NC in 1928. Governmental documentation during the era of segregation left a lot to be desired, thus, a life-long dispute was waged with officials as to whether February 7 or September 15 should be listed on her birth certificate. The latter became a part of the official record.

Gladys' parents were Ed Fowler and Lula Shadding Fowler. She moved to Durham at an early age to live with her aunt, Mamie Allen. Thus, Gladys attended Lyon Park Elementary School in Durham's famous West End community. She enjoyed being a member of the Class of 1949 at Hillside High School. Later, Gladys earned another diploma from Lincoln Academy High School.

Although she was living in Durham, Gladys stayed connected with her family in Goldsboro and Wayne County. She prized her family members and her roots in Eastern North Carolina.

At an early age and under the influence of her neighbors, Earl and Rosa Artis,

Gladys joined West Durham Baptist Church, which was in the Brookstown section of Durham. She was enormously proud to have been baptized by Rev. T.C. Graham, who was a long-term pastor of that congregation.

During her early adulthood, Gladys met and married Walter Clarence VanHook, who had been reared in the Bahama community in northern Durham County and who was a veteran of the Second World War. From this marriage, two children were born, Otto Wagner VanHook and Greta Harriette VanHook.

Gladys embarked on a long and fruitful career in health care at McPherson's Eye, Ear, Nose, & Throat Hospital. Although her marriage to Clarence VanHook ended in divorce, Gladys was always proud of the wonderful mutual relationship that she maintained with the VanHook family. To this day, Gladys is gloriously referred to as "Aunt Mae." She continued to be invited to BBC reunions of that family.

In 1979, Gladys married Willie (Bill) Watson and moved to Glenarden, Maryland, which is a suburb of Washington, DC. This was new and unfamiliar territory, but she quickly adapted and became an integral part of that community. Gladys continued her career in health care and worked at the George Washington University Hospital.

Gladys joined her husband's church and became an active choir member of Washington's First Rising Mt. Zion Baptist Church. Her voice was an important part of the Senior Choir of that church, which performed at many religious and political events in the nation's capital.

Upon the passing of Bill Watson in 2007, Gladys returned to Durham and reaffiliated with West Durham Baptist, where she worked with the Mature Members Ministry, the Pastoral Support Ministry, and the Martha Graham

Sunday School class.

She also was an active member of the National Council of Negro Women and the W.D. Hill Senior Citizens Council.

Throughout her adult life, Gladys was affiliated with the Order of the Eastern Star, the Golden Circle, and the Daughters of Zafa Temple.

Gladys is survived by her children, Otto Wagner VanHook (Rachel) and Harriette VanHook Davis (Eddie). She has two grandchildren, Christopher H.R. Taylor (Ketha) and Jessica C.A. Taylor-Williams (Glenn). She also has a special granddaughter, Frankie Boxley Cozart.

In addition, Gladys has several great-grandchildren: Nykoia Brewington, Keenan St. Clair, Alabi Orisadele, Isaiah Newton, Lola Williams, and Langston Williams.

Also, Gladys is survived by her sister-in-law, Mary Jean Fowler and a cousin, Alease Fields.

Gladys was blessed with a host of cousins, other relatives, and friends in Durham, Goldsboro, Washington, and beyond.

Services to celebrate the life of Mrs. Gladys A. Fowler VanHook Watson will be held on Friday, December 30, 2022, at West Durham Baptist Church, 1901 Athens Street, Durham, North Carolina 27707; OES Rites at 10:45 a.m., viewing at 11:00 a.m., followed by the celebration of life service at 12:00 p.m.

Cemetery Details

Beechwood Cemetery

3300 Fayetteville St
Durham, NC 27707
(919) 560-4154

Previous Events

OES Rites

DEC 30. 10:45 AM (ET)

West Durham Baptist Church
1901 Athens Street
Durham, NC 27707
<http://www.westdurhambaptist.org/>

Visitation

DEC 30. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

West Durham Baptist Church
1901 Athens Street
Durham, NC 27707
<http://www.westdurhambaptist.org/>

Celebration of Life

DEC 30. 12:00 PM (ET)

West Durham Baptist Church
1901 Athens Street
Durham, NC 27707
<http://www.westdurhambaptist.org/>

Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Gladys Fowler VanHook Watson*

October 05, 2023 at 11:31 AM



“ *Dennis Mathews lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Gladys Fowler VanHook Watson*



Dennis Mathews - March 01, 2023 at 08:03 PM



“ *Loved her since I met her. She came to Mississippi to meet us before my son married her granddaughter Jessica. A kind soul indeed. Mrs. Gladys tried to pay me for a gift. I think of that often. Rest In Eternal Peace. ❤️*



Marilyn K. Williams - December 29, 2022 at 09:17 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Mrs. Gladys Fowler VanHook Watson.*



December 29, 2022 at 11:44 AM

CK

“ It is with broken hearts that we send our deepest condolences for the loss of Grandma Gladys. It is with great Joy that I smile in remembrance of her wonderful life, kind spirit and loving nature. She enjoyed my cooking for her and especially my sweet potato pies. It was a pleasure to have been blessed with her love and wisdom and may God watch over the family and bring peace in knowing that she is heaven resting. Until we see her again~May God rest her loving soul as WE Celebrate her life. ❤️

Celestine Taylor Kerina - December 29, 2022 at 12:01 AM

TN

“ Terri Reid And Family Goldsboro NC lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Gladys Fowler VanHook Watson



Terri Reid and Family Goldsboro NC - December 28, 2022 at 08:26 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Mrs. Gladys Fowler VanHook Watson.



December 28, 2022 at 10:16 AM

JB

“ We offer our sincere condolences to Harriet, Otto and the entire family of Mrs. Gladys Watson. Mrs. Watson was simply a joy and delight and will be greatly missed. Our continuous prayers will be with you. If there is anything we can do to ease this great loss, please know we will be right there. Joseph and Antoinette Burwell

Joseph & Antoinette Burwell - December 27, 2022 at 07:31 AM

MR

Harriette, I am so sorry for the passing of your mother and offer my sincere condolences. You were always there for her, to take care of her. You and your family will continue to be lifted in prayer.
Mozell Robinson-Knight

Mozell Robinson-Knight - December 27, 2022 at 01:14 PM

TS

Harriet's
I am so sorry to hear of your mother's passing. You took great care of her. My condolences to you and your family. May precious memories be of comfort.

Theodosia T. Shields

Theodosia T Shields - December 28, 2022 at 09:17 AM