

In loving memory of

PHILIP
BARRON
BRANCH

August 20, 1942 - September 22, 2023



ORDER OF SERVICE

Officiating Pastor	Dr. Colby Matlock, Pastor, Breath of Life SDA ChurchDr.
Processional Clergy	
Processional Music Instrumental	Dr. Beverly Vaughn (Pine Forge Academy Class of '67)
Prayer of Comfort	Pastor Alexis Meyers
Special Music	James Harris "Amazing Grace"
Special Remarks	Pastor Alfred Johnson, former Pastor of Breath of Life SDA Church
Life Sketch	Kristin Turner
Reflections	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dr. Wendell Cheatham, United States Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery (Pine Forge Academy class of '60)• Mignon Scott-Hale (Pine Forge Academy Class of '60)• Cynthia Poole, Associate Director for Early Childhood & REACH Columbia Union (Pine Forge Academy Class of '63)
Tribute	Paul Johnson (Nephew)
Poem	Valerie "Gail" Johnson (Sister) - Ashley Dean (Niece)
Letters from Daughters	Michelle "Shelly" Powell and Gianna Hylton
Scripture Reading	1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 - Joe Young, Elder Breath of Life SDA Church
Special Music	Anika Sampson-Anderson "We Shall Behold Him"
Eulogy	Joe Young, Elder Breath of Life SDA Church
Benediction	Dr. Colby Matlock, Pastor, Breath of Life SDA Church
Recessional	(Clergy and Family) - Pine Forge Academy Anthem: Dr. Beverly Vaughn

Repass will be held downstairs immediately following the service.



OBITUARY

Philip (Phil) Barron Branch was born to Odell Bannerman and Jessie Evette Branch on August 20, 1942, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At the age of five (5), Philip's mother married Pastor Jasper J. Johnson, and his parents raised him with the help of his grandmother, Annie Jacobs-Branch (William Branch). He attended Oakwood Elementary School in Huntsville, Alabama. He later attended Pine Forge Academy (Class of '62), a Seventh-Day Adventist boarding school in Pine Forge, Pennsylvania, where he developed life-long friendships and fond memories of many classmates and his church family. Phil was an intellectual. Since childhood, Phil has been an avid reader of all kinds of material, from new discoveries in science to photography. He would research multiple topics at one time and analyze his findings. Because of his thirst for knowledge, Phil was known as a walking encyclopedia – as he could converse on almost any subject.

After graduation, Philip served as a medic in the United States Army. Most of his service was spent stationed in Verona, Italy, during the Cuban Missile Crisis. He was awarded a Good Conduct Medal and a Sharpshooter (M-1) Certificate before being honorably discharged in 1967. Phillip became a machinist after attending Pennsylvania University and landed a job at Caterpillar Tractor Company. While there, he was recognized for developing a new procedure for utilizing equipment that was both cost-effective and improved efficiency. Known as a leader on his job and in the community, Philip also served as a shop Union Representative addressing labor disputes with the United Automobile, Aerospace and Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW) and as a co-founder of the Black Men's Business Association in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Phil spent the remainder of his career as an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Specialist with the United States Department of Interior, Fish, and Wildlife Service, investigating employee disputes and recommending specific settlement decisions. Until he retired, he boasted a perfect record of not having a single settlement decision overturned.

Phil and his wife, Pat Branch, recently celebrated their 46th Wedding Anniversary over the Labor Day weekend. Phil met his wife, Patricia "Pat" Glenn Long, through a mutual friend, and after only three weeks, they were married – prompting him to resettle in Washington, DC. From that marriage, he was blessed with two daughters: Gianna Branch (Hylton), whom they welcomed in 1979, and Michelle Long (Powell), whom he raised from the age of seven (7) years old.

Phil's interests included a love for cooking and baking (he was always finding new recipes to try), a love of cars (he was always abreast of the latest cars and technology), a love of skiing, and a love of photography – a hobby he picked up later in life that allowed him to take candid shots, capture family moments, and photograph his grandchildren's athletic games and performances.

Phil had a dry wit and quirky sense of humor. Often times people got his joke much later; other times, he was amusing. For instance, Phil would call his dog Atticus "Asparagus" and would purposely re-assign people's names as a form of endearment. As all parents do, he assigned house chores to his daughters when they were young. But when they asked what to do with a particular item while cleaning, he would say, "Put it in your pocket." Phil also could often be heard singing silly songs he made up while doing things around the house or interacting with the dog or grandchildren.

Philip is survived by his wife - Patricia Branch (family dog Atticus); two (2) daughters - Michelle "Shelly" Long Powell and Gianna Hylton; four (4) grandchildren - Quinton Powell (wife Althea and their two children Phoenix and Koa), Emanuel Hylton, Nyhiem Hylton, Jessie "Ezra" Powell, sister - Valerie "Gail" Johnson (niece - Ashley Dean) niece Nickea Johnson, nephews Steve Johnson, Jr., Paul Johnson, sixteen (16) great nieces and nephews, a host of aunts, uncles, cousins and friends. His brother, Steve Johnson, and niece, Cherie Johnson, preceded him in death.

He will be deeply missed.



FAMILY TIES

Philip Branch was a member of the Jacobs family.

Jacobs are a family of color foundational to the creation of America, North Carolina, and post-Civil War Black America, and the linking family for our reunion.

Kidnapped by enemy tribes in Congo, then Portuguese enslavers, then Dutch pirates, Gabriel Jacobs crossed the water (Atlantic) and landed on Virginia's Eastern Shore right after the 1619 Congo men and women.

Jacobs negotiated themselves to freedom by 1700. Tens of Jacobs fought in the American Revolution to create a free country "for all." They fought under the Stars & Stripes and under the hope that equality would apply to them unequivocally.

Phil's grandmother, Annie Jacobs, was born, lived, and rests on the land Jacobs secured when they moved to North Carolina in the 1750s: Pender County, NC.

Phil Branch was a valued member of our clan. He was warm, thoughtful, and steady. He cared for his family and his history.

The current PenderROCK family and four hundred years of American ancestors commemorate Phil's crossing of the final Great Water, the River Jordan, emblematic of our faith and hope.

Tyrone S. Goodwyn

Pender Reunion Of Colored Kindred (PenderROCK)





MICHELLE'S LETTER TO DAD

Dear Dad,

I remember the first time I called you that. It seemed like only minutes after you kissed my mother and said I do. I was standing there in my bright yellow dress, matching Mom in her favorite color. I looked up at you as we posed for pictures and asked, "Does this mean I can call you daddy now?" You laughed, and with a big grin, you said yes. My heart melted, and I remember feeling like the luckiest little girl because I now had not one but two daddies! Not once did you make me feel like a stepdaughter growing up. I know I was a very talkative child, and you would indulge my long storytelling as I recounted my school day or asked what seemed like 20 questions on the ride home.

That didn't change when I became an awkward pre-teen. You were still there to listen and help me navigate my social dilemmas, like having multiple friend groups who didn't necessarily get along, which made picking sleepover friends a perplexing task. You were the one who helped me pick out my back-to-school outfits (Mom admitted she was no fashionista). Whenever I accomplished something I thought was big or overcame a friend dilemma, I couldn't wait to tell you because I knew you would celebrate with me. I recall many activities we did together that piqued my life-long interests and hobbies. Together, we would comb through interior design magazines and dream of restyling our home or what we would put in a new one. You introduced me to jazz music, and in my adult years, we'd swap new music finds and whole playlists. I loved that you were an avid reader and could talk about almost anything; you gave me a love for books. It was fun to come home to see what new dishes you had created or baked goods you made; you gave me a love for food and encouraged me to expand my palate. We both loved a good laugh and sometimes had the silliest conversations about nonsensical things that just sounded funny.

We also had deep conversations on spiritual matters. More than family worship, I used to love our Friday night talks – just you and me - that sometimes went into the late-night hours. Other times, we had deep philosophical conversations; you made me a critical thinker and someone who thirsts for knowledge. When you were done raising me into adulthood, you became my friend, one I would still call on Friday nights for those long chats. It wasn't always laughs and good memory-making.

We had some hard times, too, that really challenged our relationship. But I learned that a forgiving heart heals all wounds. And as I say goodbye to you now, I choose to hold on to the best of my memories of you.

Thank you for coming into my life. When you chose my mother, you chose me, too. I am the person I am today in part because of you. Until we can laugh together again, rest in peace.

Love,

Shelly "Woo Woo"



GIANNA'S LETTER TO DAD

Gianna Kellee; Phil and Pat's brown-eyed baby girl. Mom wanted to name me "Tiffany," but you weren't having it! Having spent years in Italy, "Gianna" it was!

You taught me how to cook and had me baking peach pies at 11 years old.

You taught me how to cut hair and turned me into your barber by 12 years old.

You made me your assistant when working on your cars and showed me how to "rig" a Mercedes-Benz because they were known for electrical problems, and you wanted to prepare me in the event the car acted up.

You were Google before Google was invented; anything we needed to know, we'd say, "Did you ask Daddy"?

You took me to the car shows every year and always shared with me the latest cars in your car magazines you had subscriptions to. We shared a love of cars so much that my room did not look like the room of a teenage girl because I had posters of cars all over my walls. I would joke and say that you wished you had a son, so that's why you would have me do all those things with you.

I'll never forget wanting to take drum lessons, and you told me "NO"! I begged and begged, and your reason was you didn't want to hear "that mess in the house"! I never let you forget that either; I could've been the next Sheila E.

I'll never forget our "good morning" grunts in the kitchen or passing through the hallway because neither of us were "morning people," and we didn't want to talk to anyone that early!

I'll never forget how you and Mom made sure I was able to spend the summer abroad in Spain because it was important to you that I had that exposure. You were so perturbed when picking me up from the airport that all I would say in Spanish was "Hola"! I was just upset because you didn't let me go to Italy with the others.

I'll never forget how I stayed on punishment for what seemed like three years, but somehow, I was still allowed to spend the night with my friends and church family...most of which are here today.

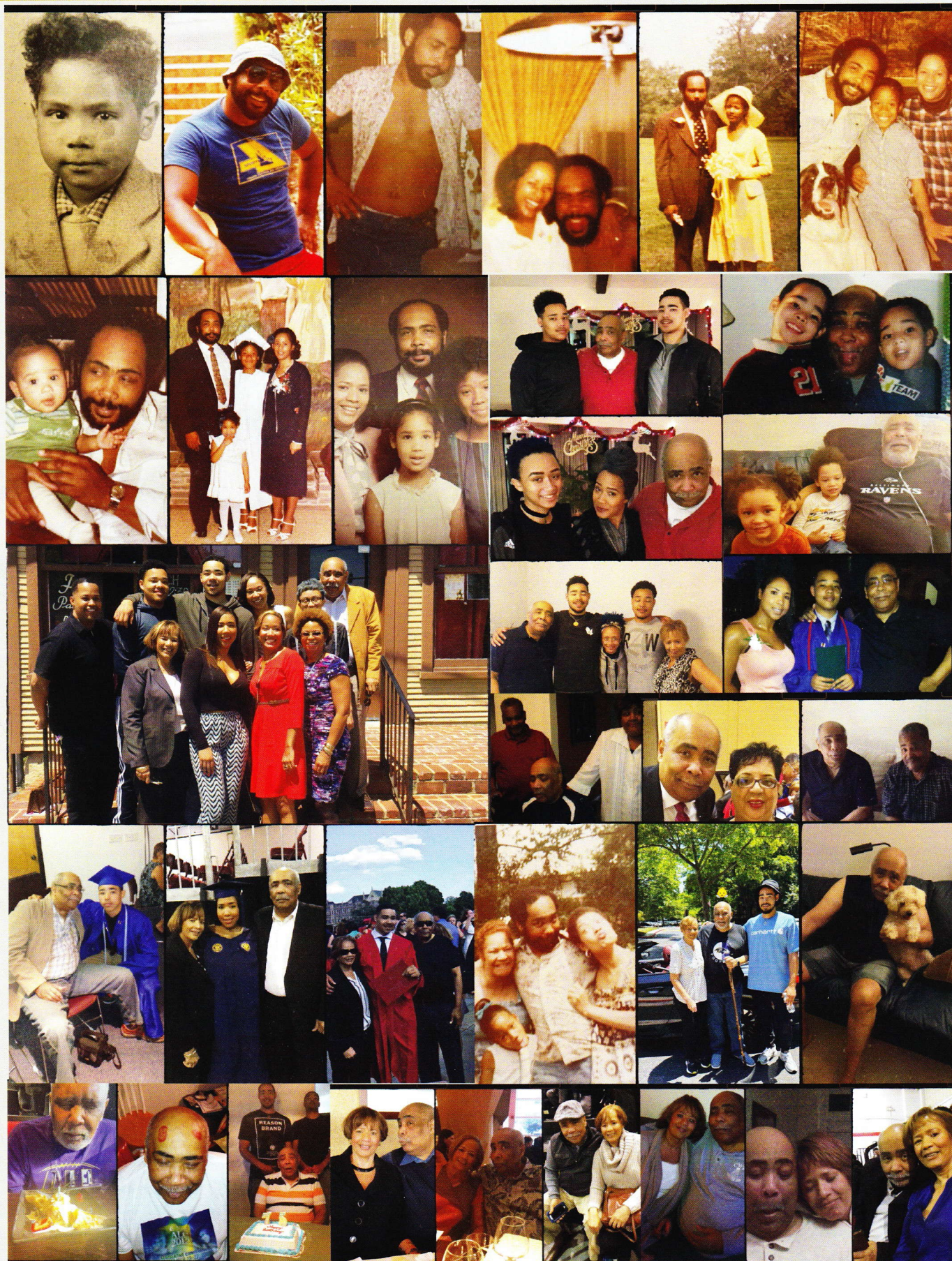
You were quick to let me know who you didn't have a "good feeling" about but also put your trust in my "brothers" (Jamaul, Vinny, Ron, Charles, and Sheldon). The fact that you trusted your daughter was in good hands with them forever bonded us as family.

You had great taste in all things; we were always on the same page about clothes, cars, furniture, houses, and definitely food! Whenever we would dine out, you would order in secret and pretend like you weren't going to share because you would always order the best thing on the menu.

You taught me I better know how to do things myself if I wanted to get them done so I never had to rely on others; because of that I was never scared to get my hands dirty or attack situations head-on. I never took "no" for an answer; you and Mom were convinced I was going to be a trial attorney. Most of the time, I got my way, within reason.

I would always get in trouble for having to have the last word, but this time, you had the last word! You will always be in my heart; when I see you again, I'm going to greet you playing the drums.....

Love, "Buck"





AUTUMN CAME TOO SOON

My Brother Phil, a towering evergreen so grand,
his leaves unaltered by Autumn's gentle hand.
Yet this year, Autumn's touch arrived too soon.

As he slumbered, Autumn whispered Phil's name beneath the moon.

With care, it whispered, careful not to stir his dreams,

Aware of the farewell, Phil's soul would gleam.

Unafraid, he embraced this tranquil sleep,
Believing in God's embrace and His promise to keep.

Autumn's arrival, though untimely it may seem,

God's timing is flawless, like a flowing stream.

Guiding Phil's journey as he prepared to rest
In that sacred room, God's presence was manifest.

For my beloved brother, a celestial embrace,

God's eternal love, His comforting grace.

In the gentle rustle of leaves and in the quiet gloom,
Phil found his peace where Heaven met the room.

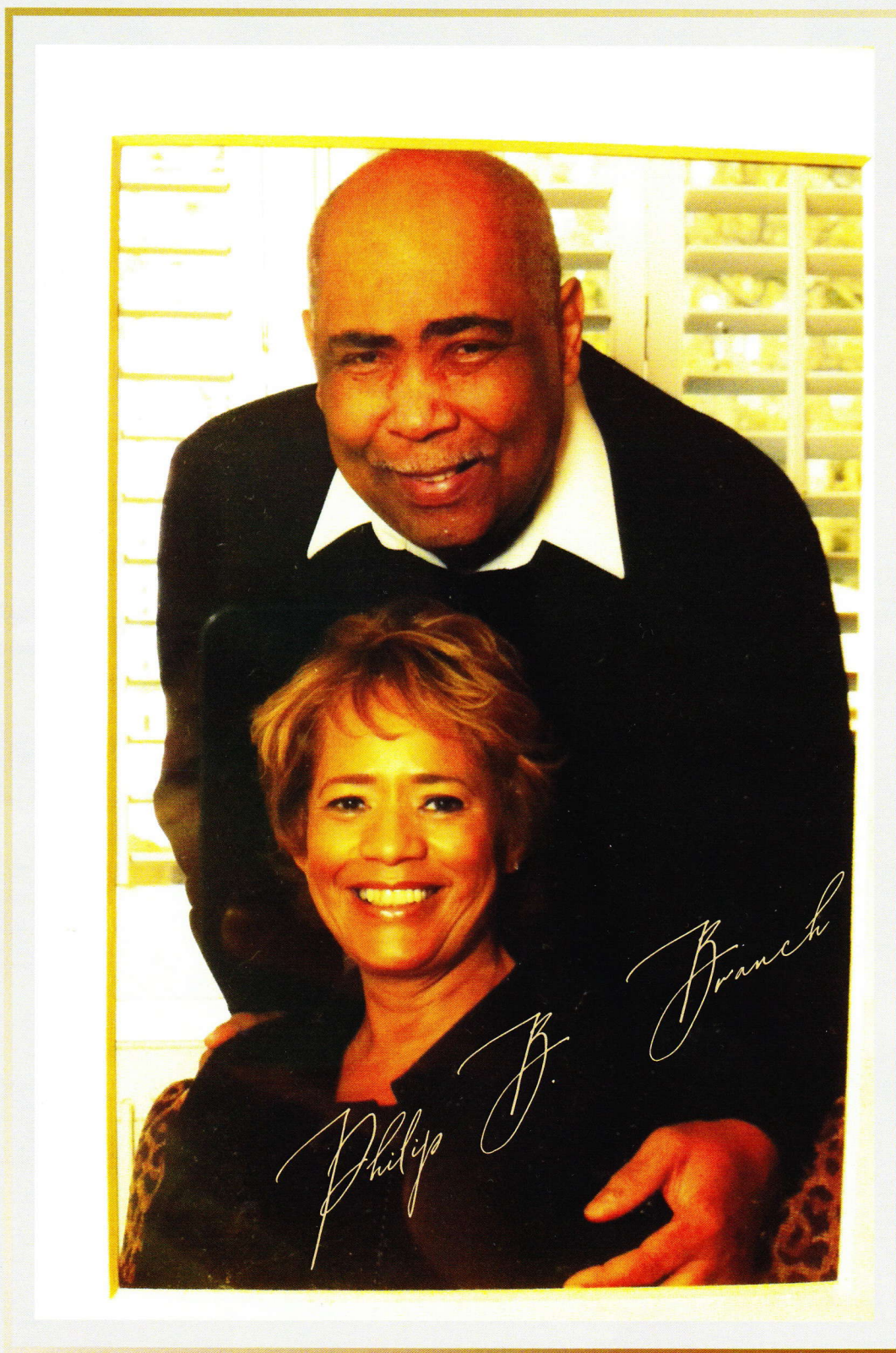
A soul so gentle, a heart so kind,
leaving cherished memories forever in our minds.

Rest now, dear Brother, in a waiting sleep,
In the embrace of our heavenly Father, so tender and deep.

Know that you are loved, now and forevermore,
as we cherish the moments we had before.

Till we meet again on that sweet day.

Valerie "Gail" Johnson-Parks



The family would like to thank everyone who offered prayers and condolences, sent flowers and food, provided their services, and made monetary contributions. We truly appreciate the support in our time of grief.