



Lucille Sydnor

MAY 15, 1917 - MAY 10, 2019



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Born in Corinth, Mississippi, Gladys Lucille Webb joined her parents, Adrienne Combs and William Dakota Webb at 1109 Meigg Street on May 15, 1917. She was soon joined by her siblings: William D. Webb, Jr., James C. Webb, Jerry E. Webb, Walter D. Webb, and Miriam H. Webb. An important family in the local community, the Webb family home is now the regional museum of Black History.

As a young woman in Corinth, Lucille Webb met and married James Spearman (m. 1936-1946). James A. and Michael W. Spearman were born of this union. Lucille cared for her sons as they made their way from Corinth to Detroit, Michigan.

Upon arriving in Detroit, Lucille and her sons moved into the historic Black Bottom neighborhood on Hastings St. at Saint Antoine. The strip was home to the city's major African American community of black-owned businesses, social institutions and night clubs. During this time, Lucille's love for classical music blossomed, as she spent time listening to symphonies from Haydn, Mozart and Vivaldi, among others. To make ends meet, Lucille held a variety of jobs, including a stint as a pin setter at a local bowling alley—a story she loved to tell. She eventually landed a job as an assembly line worker at the United States Rubber Company (Uniroyal), where they made tires and other products, on East Jefferson Avenue near the foot of the Belle Isle bridge. Although it was a good job, Lucille realized that factory work was just not her cup of tea, so she decided to make a change.

Lucille was an amazingly determined individual. She bought herself a used typewriter, a how-to book and taught herself how to type. She gained proficiency quickly and sought secretarial work, becoming the assistant to Victor Reuther, brother of Walter Reuther who was president of the United Automobile Workers (UAW). Lucille helped Victor, as he led the progressive union's Education Department.

Ironically, Lucille was involved in three serious automobile accidents during a single



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tumultuous year in the 1940s and developed a fear of riding in cars. As a result, she took the bus everywhere while living in Detroit and although it was cumbersome, she made the best of it.

During this time, she met and married Sydney Altman (m. 1947-1953) and the family moved to Philadelphia Street. They lived there until moving to New York City in 1951. There were two things that attracted Lucille to NYC at that time: The City University of New York (CUNY) tuition-free program for graduating high school seniors, which would benefit her sons; and the highly available public transportation system so she would never have to ride in a car.

When the family arrived in NYC, Lucille enjoyed the many diversions that NYC had to offer and on occasion, she would even enjoy listening to a Brooklyn Dodgers or a New York Giants game. She took a secretarial job with the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which was founded at the request of Albert Einstein, to provide emergency aid and long-term assistance to refugees and those displaced by war, persecution, or natural disaster. She excelled in this position and took her expertise with her when she moved back to the unions to work for Fred Fulford, the president of the United Furniture Workers of America. She remained with the UFW until the headquarters relocated to Nashville, Tennessee in 1979.

Inspired by the civil rights movement, Lucille joined thousands during the March on Washington, in August 1963. During that historic weekend, she met her third husband Earl Sydnor, a stage and screen actor. Ultimately, it was he who finally got her back into a car when she agreed to take a road trip with him to Virginia to visit his relatives. However, she still preferred walking, taking the bus or traveling by train whenever possible.

Lucille and Earl married in 1975 and enjoyed a loving marriage until his death in 1989. She would often attend his stage performances in NYC along with other theater productions throughout the city. Lucille was also fond of spending an afternoon at the Metropolitan Opera or an evening at a classical music performance. Among her favorites was the Budapest String Quartet. She was also a patron of the Metropolitan Museum of Art—donating a unique Tiffany Window, which the museum often uses in its promotional materials to this day.



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Lucille's working life came to a close at Citibank, receiving a pension when she retired in 1982. An avid traveler, Lucille visited the Giza plateau in Egypt and the Great Wall of China. Paris was a favorite destination of hers where she enjoyed time with local friends and touring the Louvre, the National Museum of African Art, Guimet Museum of Asian Art and the Beaubourg Museum.

At 90, Lucille relocated to Florida, spending her final active years in Miami.

Lucille is survived by her devoted son, James (Peggy), grandchildren, Craig (Kim), Mark, and Zora, great-grandchildren, David, Heather (Antwain), Bridgitte, Micah, Myles, and Hasan, great-great grandchildren, Kalayah, Isaiah, Braylen, and Aaliyah, her brother, Walter, and many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

She will be missed by family and friends.



Tribute Wall

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JJ

Judy Joseph posted:

I'm not sure why I thought of miss sydnor today, but I did and I googled and found her obituary she was such a giving and wonderful lady. I remembered I was so scared of Abby and she would lock her in her room whenever me or my mother would clean her home. She was responsible for my first tuition in my first semester of college. I didn't have the money and she was so proud that f me and gave me a check to cover the entire tuition. I'm so sorry to hear of her passing. God bless her she was a very kind, giving and generous.

December 4 at 3:18 PM

SH

Shakeya lit a candle in honor of Lucille.

I remember her she was such a sweet and giving lady . Her poodle Abby was so hyper

April 26 at 11:15 PM





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Lucille by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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