

In Memoriam

Moving On To God's Glory And His Eternal Love

By Patricia Smith-Deering
Phoenix Managing Editor

It can be hard to convince the living that oftentimes the passing of a loved one is an opportunity to celebrate life. But, when the person has touched the lives and families of many, the legacy that is left lives on. Frances Rebecca Smith Gilmore was such a person.

Born into the union of Ida Bell Martin Smith and George Henry Smith, Sr. in 1919, Mrs. Gilmore, even as she was growing to womanhood in her native Danbury, North Carolina, "aspired for greatness." She came to Winston-Salem when she was approximately 16, where she lived with an older sister while attending Atkins High School. After graduation, she attended and graduated from McLean Stenographic College.

Her marriage in 1943 to Jerry C. Gilmore, Jr. was the start of a union that was fruitful in many ways. The Gilmores entered the world of business, first with the Cherry Street Grocery Store in 1946, then the business that would become a consuming passion, Gilmore's Funeral Home, in 1948. "She was the first female in this



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area to participate and support her husband in the funeral profession," said Cynthia Gilmore-Douthit, one of two children born to the Gilmore's. "She started out driving the hearse and (was a) female funeral attendant."

Self-taught, Mrs. Gilmore served the funeral home in many capacities, including hair designer, cosmetologist, bookkeeper, and arranging funeral services. The couple's enterprise grew to include Gilmore's Rental Properties and Gilmore's Investments.

Even more important than the business were the children who became involved in one of the city's leading Black businesses: daughter Cynthia and son, Jerry C. Gilmore, III. "We were brought up in the business," said Cynthia, reflecting on her memories of her mother. She recalled the death of her father in August, 1989, and how the indomitable spirit of her mother was so strongly evident.

"When Daddy passed, we came back here (to the funeral home), and she sat here and worked," Cynthia said. Refusing to take time away, her mother did what she knew

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