

OBITUARY (CONT'D)

two committees); the St. Agnes Guild; and the Bridge Club. Billie was a charter member of the Monmouth Shore Chapter of Smart Set and active in that chapter as long as her health permitted. She was also a champion of the environment, and a forerunner of the recycling movement years before it was mandated.

Billie was a fan of many things. She adored art, music and movies—especially films starring Denzel Washington. She counted peanuts and gingersnaps as her favorite snack food and prided herself in being able to turn almost any entree into a sandwich. She was crazy for Barack Obama, and had many pictures of him throughout her home. *Wilhelmina* cherished her role as “Grandmom” and passed along to her grandchildren a legacy of love, honesty, hard work, inspiring conversation and, of course, excellent manners.

She was predeceased by her husbands, Philip Johnson and Gray Gillem; parents, and sister, Mildred Robinson. Wilhelmina “Billie” Pearl Steele Johnson Gillem's life was long and well-lived. She lives to treasure her memory her daughter, Cynthia Beth Johnson (Pat) and son, Philip William Johnson (Lisa) both of Texas; grandchildren Jessica Rose Shofner (Daniel), Adam Steele Johnson and Sonia Anabel Sims Johnson of Texas, and Philip Walter Sims Johnson of Seattle WA; brother-in-law, Ruselle Willie Robinson, Sr of Lakewood, NJ; godson and nephew, Ruselle Willie Robinson, Jr., of Newton, MA; sister-in-law, Tommie Johnson of Detroit, MI as well as many beloved cousins across the country.

THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN

Her children arise up, and call her blessed;

her husband also, and he praiseth her.

Many daughters have done virtuously,

but thou excellest them all.

Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain:

but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

Proverbs 31: 28-30 KJV

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A CELEBRATION OF LIFE

FOR

Wilhelmina Gillem



“Billie”

May 21, 1923 – June 8, 2018

SATURDAY, AUGUST 11, 2018
11:00 A.M.

ST AUGUSTINE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
155 PROSPECT AVENUE
ASBURY PARK, NJ 07712

ORDER OF SERVICE

PROCESSIONAL.....	
ANTHEM.....	BCP Pg. 491
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COLLECT	BCP Pg. 493
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PSALM 23.....	MRS. JESSICA ROSE SHOFNER
REVELATION 7:9 – 17.....	MRS. DIANE WRAN-FARRIS
GRADUAL HYMN “WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS”.....	LEVAS 109
GOSPEL – JOHN 10:11-16.....	
HYMN – “AMAZING GRACE”	LEVAS 181
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THE GREAT THANKSGIVING.....	BCP Pg. 367
THE LORD’S PRAYER.....	
THE BREAKING OF BREAD.....	
MINISTRATION OF COMMUNION	
HYMN – PRECIOUS LORD	MR. CHARLES P. NICHOLAS
POST COMMUNICATION PRAYER.....	BCP Pg. 498
THE COMMENDATION	BCP Pg. 499
CLOSING REMARKS.....	MR. PHILIP WILLIAM JOHNSON
CLOSING HYMN – “SOON AND VERY SOON”.....	LEVAS 14

REPAST

REPAST IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE SERVICE
IN THE UNDERCROFT OF THE CHURCH

OBITUARY

After several years of valiantly fighting the challenges of Alzheimer's disease, *Wilhelmina “Billie” Pearl Steele Johnson Gillem* passed away on June 8, 2018, at Brandywine Assisted Living in Wall Township. She lived a rich life deeply embedded in the love of God, family, friends, education and service.

Wilhelmina was born on Monday, May 21, 1923 to Lula Cooper Steele and William Lawrence Steele in Neptune, New Jersey. Mr. and Mrs. Steele were dedicated Methodists, and *Wilhelmina* was a member of St. Stephens AME Zion church in her younger years. Following the birth of her first child she was confirmed at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church and remained a faithful member until her death.

Wilhelmina attended Neptune Public schools. Aspiring to teach young people, *Wilhelmina* attended and graduated from Trenton State Teachers College (now The College of New Jersey) with a degree in Education and a concentration in English. She was one of the first black students to live on campus and the first to complete a practicum at the campus demonstration school.

By 1949 *Wilhelmina* and Philip Daniel Johnson' friendship had blossomed into matrimony. To this union two children were born, Cynthia Beth and Philip William. She instilled in Cynthia and Philip a sense of pride of identity and their African American heritage. Son Philip mused, “Mom was proud of who she was and where she came from. *Billie's* husband Philip was the enduring love of her life and they enjoyed four decades of marriage until Philip passed away in 1989. Even in later years, she frequently spoke about how much she loved and missed him.

Formal, kind and ever gracious, *Wilhelmina* will always be remembered for her impeccable manners. Her favorite mode of communication was a handwritten note or letter in her signature cursive.

In the 1990s, *Billie* renewed a friendship with Henry Gray Gillem of Virginia. The two had originally met as young adults. But life has a way of going full circle. *Billie* and Gray enjoyed their time together. They traveled extensively and were married for twenty years before Gray's passing in 2016.

Being an educator was a cornerstone of who she was. *Wilhelmina* was a devoted teacher and taught at a number of schools including PS 44 in Brooklyn NY, and West End Elementary School in the Long Branch School District. She was a supporter and former member of the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) teachers union; and a faithful attendee of the NJEA's annual convention in Atlantic City. A fierce believer in justice, *Wilhelmina* not only refused to cross a picket line during a teacher's strike in the 1970s, she joined the picket line in solidarity.

Billie loved God, church, family and her diverse group of friends. She was a member of many organizations including The League of Women Voters (chairing

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