



Ruth Deal Adams

April 12, 1913 - July 24, 2019

Ruth Lillace Deal Adams was born in West Palm Beach, Florida on April 12, 1913. She was the eldest of seven children by James Francis Deal and Eva Veronica Turnquest Deal: Winifred “Winnie” L. Deal Foster, James F. Deal, Jr., Cyril A.E. Deal, Elwood A. Deal, Willard A. Deal, and Sarah “Sally” E. Deal Davis. Their parents were born in Clarence Town, Long Island, Bahamas, but they moved and settled in West Palm Beach. The Bahamian Islands were under British monarchy, and their mother wanted them to have a British education. Therefore, they moved the whole family from West Palm Beach back to the Bahamas, until they had to return home because of the depression. Their mother, a seamstress, became ill with cancer, and Ruth and Winnie did as much as they could to help her with the sewing, and other household obligations. The story was told that the sewing machine foot pedal, which at the time ran the entire width of the sewing machine, doubled as a basinet for the two youngest siblings: Willard and Sally. When their mother became too ill to complete her sewing obligations, Ruth and Winnie sat on the floor, and worked the pedal of the sewing machine to relieve their mother of the physical exertion of sewing.

Like their mother, all of the girls learned the invaluable trade of sewing. Ruth was always in high demand as she sewed privately for several Palm Beach families. Winifred sewed for Bonwit Teller, and Sally went to design school and made her career as a specialist in making Bridal Gowns. Each of the girls in their own right was an excellent seamstress, able to design and create beautiful ladies’ attire with or without patterns. When her mother died, Ruth was unable to finish school because she needed to help maintain the household. At the young age of 17 she married Nathaniel James Adams. He was the first African American Boy Scout executive in Palm Beach County and served the organization for 38 years. He was well known for establishing the Boy Scouts of America for African Americans in West Palm Beach and a Boy Scout Camp in Jupiter.

Ruth and Nat had one daughter, Patricia, for whom they gave all that they had so that Pat could attend Howard University in Washington, DC. Patricia’s undergraduate, graduate education and teaching tenure led the way to Ruth’s relationships with literally thousands

of young performers. She created all of “Patsy’s” and Veronica’s clothing, from casual to formals. Winnie joined her in sewing countless chorus gowns over the years, and of course the performance apparel for the well-known Palm Beach Junior College Pacesetters.

Patricia had two children from her marriage to William “Timmie” H. Johnson (divorced), William Howard Johnson, Jr. and Veronica Ruth “Ronnie” Johnson (named for her grandmother and great grandmother). At some point, Timmie began to lovingly call his grandmother MIMI, which was also adopted by Veronica, and later, the entire community. Interestingly enough, Ruth, “Mimi,” was well versed in every facet of academia. She had a passion for English literature and Greek mythology. Mimi was an avid reader, and often times finished a novel in a day. She constantly challenged her mind with all genres of reading, working crossword puzzles and just about anything that kept her active in learning. At 78 years old, she took the GED exam and scored the highest score in the class, making it possible for her to attend college. She never realized that goal because she dedicated her life to helping her family. Nat, Ruth, Patsy, Veronica and lived together in one of the happiest family surroundings a person could ask for. That continued until the death of Nat Adams in 1982, after 52 years of marriage. Most would think that Mimi wouldn’t make it for long without her husband, Nat, but some years later, she told a friend, “It has taken me years to be able to smile on the inside, like I smile on the outside.” When she suffered the loss of her beloved husband, she did so silently, as she never complained about anything to her family.

She travelled in 1988 with her daughter and the PBJC Pacesetters to Hawaii, Australia and New Zealand, where they represented the United States performing in the World Expo. Thirty-one years ago, Mimi was 75 years old, and she traveled abroad with a group of young people one-third her age. When she turned 78, she told a family friend, Delno Tyree, that she was turning 78 years old... to which Mrs. Tyree responded, “You’re just a kid. When I was your age, I was traveling across the country in a Winnebago!” Perhaps that was a foreshadowing of the years to come. Mrs. Tyree lived to be 105, and Mimi lived to be 106.

Mimi had a beautiful voice in her own right, and she also played the mandolin. Many nights she used that mandolin, her singing, and storytelling skills to put her grandchildren, and great grandchild, Nathaniel, to sleep. In her later years, she was instrumental in Nathaniel’s upbringing. Afternoons were spent on the lake, playing, planting, running and talking. She was well known for making the best Gin and Tonics, or “highballs,” and the many wonderful conversations that stemmed from those beverages. It was a wonderful gift to have four generations in one house. There were frequent walks around the lake,

through the neighborhood, and many bridge games and social occasions with her wonderful friends: Eunice, Maxine, Rose, her sister, Winnie, Margaret, Ivy, and Martha. She belonged, along with those friends, to the Mu-So-Lit Club, which was a social and community organization geared to exploring Music, Social Activities and Literature, and raising funds for scholarships for young people in the black community aspiring to go to college.

Mimi may have had one child, but she parented countless young people, charming them with her loving personality and unique humor. She was known for being a pincher, particularly with her toes beneath the table, her sewing skills as well as her cooking skills. She played with all of us, doing puzzles, playing Badminton, volleyball, softball, Nintendo bowling, tennis and baseball, Chinese Checkers, Gin Rummy, Operation, Mouse Trap and Monopoly. She taught us all to read and write before we went to school. She helped with several generations of what she called “new math”, penmanship, grammar, literature, and history. Because Veronica had a tendency to be more social, she helped to complete thousands of “I will not talk in class” punishments. The longest repetitive form of torment for Veronica that Mimi helped with was writing hundreds of times a biblical quotation, “A young man, according to his ways, even when he is old, shall not depart from it.” That quotation held no significance for Veronica until she was standing in front of her own class of students twenty years later... in an exasperating moment when she yelled out the quotation to her students, in one of life’s biggest “Ah hah” moments.

Mimi took care of her own daughter and went on to care for her family until her passing at 106 years old. Though she lost the ability to walk, and her memories faded, her beauty and love never disappeared. She parented even when she didn’t realize it. She loved unconditionally, and gracefully allowed us to share her life with countless friends and families. She lived out her final years at Royal Manor Nursing Home, where she was lovingly cared for by many beautiful health care professionals. They became our extended family and remained faithful to her until her death on July 24, 2019.

She is predeceased by all of her friends, and survived by her youngest brother, Willard A. Deal, grandchildren, Veronica and William Johnson, and great grandchildren Nathaniel Byron T.A. Johnson, and Nigel Patrick Johnson, a host of nephews and nieces, cousins, Goddaughters, Jacquelyn Pollard Knowles, and Lynn Pride Richardson, and many, many friends. Mimi would say, “everything in moderation” is alright. One could always come to our house for some “Mimi” love. In her convalescence, Sundays were dubbed as “Mimi days” for friends who may not have ever had personal contact with Mimi. Each visit was ended with “Thank you for being the best grandmother on the planet.” The last words she

heard were “I love you,” from her great grandson, Nat. When she took her last breath, we realized we had lost our matriarch, and heaven gained another angel. May she rest in the everlasting peace she so richly deserves from a life well lived.

Cemetery

Royal Palm Memorial Gardens

5601 Greenwood Ave
West Palm Beach, FL, 33407

Events

AUG **Visitation** 10:00AM - 11:00AM

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Palms West Funeral Home and Crematory
110 Business Park Way, Royal Palm Beach, FL, US,
33411

AUG **Visitation** 12:00PM

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Holy Trinity Episcopal Church
211 Trinity Pl, West Palm Beach, FL, US, 33401

AUG **Service** 01:00PM

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