

105 YEARS OF A LIFE WELL LIVED

Alberta Lillian Thompson

Sunrise: July 13, 1920 - Sunset: August 24th, 2025



*Saint Andrew's Episcopal Church
701 West Montgomery Road | Tuskegee Institute, Alabama*

Friday, August 29, 2025 | 10AM

*Rt. Rev. Glenda S. Curry, Bishop, Episcopal Dioceses of Alabama
Officiating*

~ THE HOMEGOING SERVICE FOR ~

Alberta Lillian Thompson

Sunrise: July 13, 1920 - Sunset: August 24th, 2025

Musical Prelude

Officiating Rt. Rev. Glenda S. Curry, Bishop
Episcopal Diocese of Alabama

Opening Words & Prayer Pastor Terry Ellison
New Life Church of God in Christ (Montgomery, AL)

Scripture Readings:

Lloyd C. Williams.....Isaiah 61:1-3 & Psalm 42: 1-7

Sheila Gaillard.....Revelations 7:9-17

Bishop CurryJohn 5:24-27

Musical Selection..... Tuskegee University Golden Ensemble, Dr. Barr

TributeDebra Gunn, Church Member

TributeDr. Nichole Thompson, Daughter in Law

Musical Selection..... Tuskegee University Golden Ensemble, Dr. Barr

EulogyBishop Curry

Closing Music Larry Thompson, Amazing Grace

INTERMENT
Greenwood Cemetery

PALLBEARERS

Deacons New Life Church in God and Christ
Montgomery, AL

~The Obituary~

Alberta Lillian Thompson, known to many as Lil, was born on July 13, 1920, in her family's home near the gates of the world-famous Tuskegee University, home to Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, and the Tuskegee Airmen. Lil was the third of four children and the only daughter of Harry Simms and Alberta Simms. Her brothers Noble Simms, Ernest Simms, and Robert Simms preceded her in death.

Lil's story is inseparably tied to a rich family heritage. Her grandfather, Harry Sims, was one of four brothers who, during the era of American slavery, were transported from Virginia to Texas. Harry Sims married Ellen Petite and settled in Armstrong Colony, TX, just outside San Antonio. They had 11 children—the youngest, Harry, carried on the family name. Harry and Ellen learned to read by reading the Bible, and education was valued above all else. All eleven children—five boys and six girls—were educated. Five became teachers; one son was an artist; another became a professional architect; a seamstress and a musician were among them. These were the children of the first generation after slavery.

Harry Sims came to Tuskegee in the early 1900s to attend what is now Tuskegee University. He studied agriculture and was the valedictorian of the class of 1908. After graduation, he worked closely with George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington as a teacher and agricultural field agent. He met his future wife, Alberta Simms, while serving as principal at the Snow Hill campus of Tuskegee University. Alberta Simms, who came to Tuskegee to work in the music department in the early 1900s, was the organist for the funerals of both Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver. The family's history is deeply interwoven with Tuskegee.

Lil's mother, Alberta Simms, also came from a family of educators. Her grandfather on her mother's side was born into slavery and was one of the seven founders of Fayetteville State University. He worked in the music department for more than 30 years and became an authority on Negro spirituals. Among the spirituals she helped arrange were "Climbing Jacob's Ladder," "Deep River," "Roll Jordan Roll," "Still Away," "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," and "Go Down Moses."

It was no coincidence that Lil became an artist in her own right. Her stunning wood carvings were proudly exhibited by Roots and Wings Books, owned and operated by Deloris Boyd and Vanzetta Penn McPherson, who showcased her work. Lil was especially proud of the collection's beautiful name, Cinnamon City. She spoke with pride about the experience and the honor of having her work showcased in such a celebrated African American focused setting.

Lil was preceded in death by three of her children: Samuel, Anitra, and Milton. She is survived by her son Robert, daughter-in-law Nichole, grandchildren Bradley, Kennedy, Cassidy, Philbert, Dwayne, Keith, Gregory, and Tracy, as well as nieces and nephews, Leah Simms, Michael Simms, Kenya Lee, Kalil and Kari Lee, Joyce Simms, and her beloved great-granddaughter Nova Elise Thompson.

Her daughter-in-law Betty Riley remained close to her, and she was lovingly cared for by Patrick Jackson and his wife, as well as her devoted church family. Lil became a member of St. Andrews more than 75 years ago and remained a faithful member until her passing. In her final days, Quentin Gaillard delivered lunch and communion to her door.

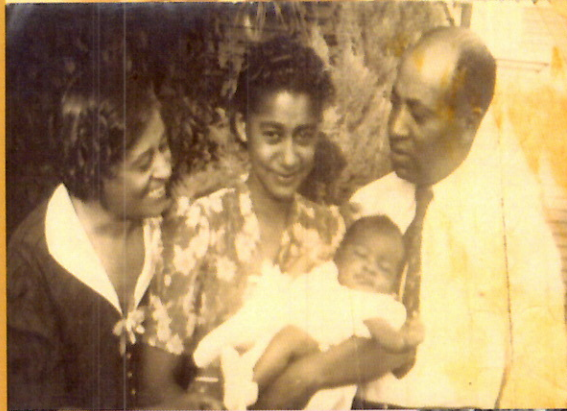
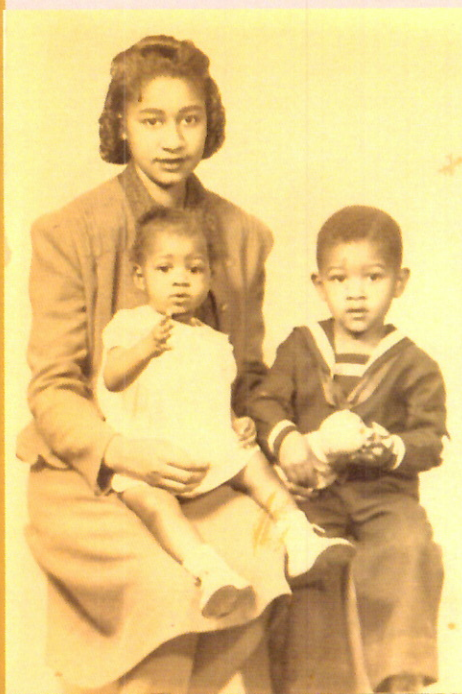
Lil's joy and peace came from carving what she called her "family of children"—wood carvings she began in 1980. She created more than 100 figures and gave only two away during her lifetime. Another lifelong achievement she treasured was becoming a celebrated author. Her book of poetry, *Expressions Of Life In Words and Wood*, was published by her daughter in-law Nichole and her sister Beth.

She has been described as a renaissance woman—an author, poet, musician, and sculptor. Among her many accomplishments, she was a founding charter member of Jack and Jill of America Tuskegee Chapter. She contributed to the Black Women's Oral History Project sponsored by Harvard University's Schlesinger Library, and was honored to be a roommate of Miss Norma Boyd, a founding member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. She wore with pride the certificate of honor she received as a graduate of the Tuskegee University Class of 1941.

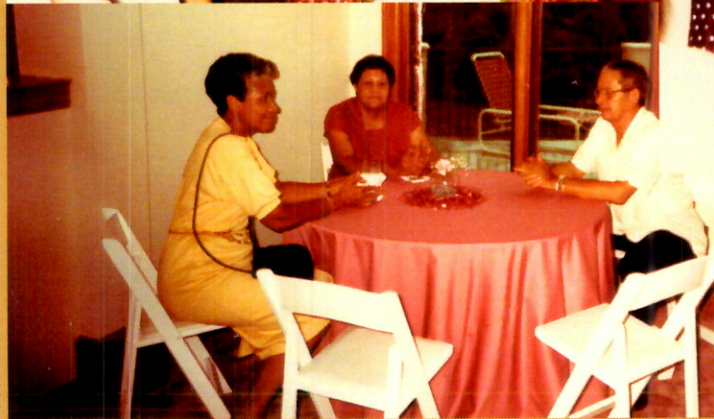
At 105, Lil's mind remained sharp, and she lived independently in her home. She stopped driving at 101 but continued to lead a life of dignity and purpose. On Sunday, August 24, 2025, Lil passed peacefully at home, as she had wished, surrounded by love. Her life touched many and made the world a better place. She completed her mission, and in the words of her faith, she heard, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Lil would be astonished by the number of people who gathered to honor her homegoing, for she had always been a humble and devoted servant of her faith and family. Her presence will be deeply missed, but her legacy endures in the lives she touched.

Precious Early Memories



70th Birthday Party





TUSKEGEE

UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF ALUMNI AFFAIRS
AUGUST 8, 2014

proudly presents

A. LILLIAN THOMPSON
CLASS OF 1941

with the

"ILLUSTRIOUS ALUMNI TRAILBLAZER"
93 YEARS YOUNG

Lillian Expressions of Life in Words and Wood

Poems by A. Lillian Thompson

AGE??

I did not feel a change in me,
When I reached "sweet sixteen,"
Nor did a special feeling come,
When I was twenty one.
Life would begin at forty,
That's what I'd been told,
So all day long I waited,
To see my unfold.
On the day that I was fifty,
I heard words that set me free:
"Today is the first day of the rest of your life"
I stopped waiting and took this advice.
I enrolled in all sorts of classes,
To learn things I'd wanted to try.
I even went off to Bethel, Maine
To relearn how to cry.
Just before age sixty five,
Decided I should learn how to drive,
And so I did, then passed the test,
Bought a car and thought, -what's next?
Old age now has come to me,
I'll feel this in time, I'm told,
But since I didn't feel "sweet sixteen"
Why should I ever feel old?

BE SOMEBODY

Be somebody,
When you grow up,
My parents said to me,
But never, ever, did they say,
Who it was I should be.
So, I tried to do as I was told,
Be someone else, as I grew old.
In vain I searched, but could not find,
A life to live, that was not mine.
Perhaps, what they meant,
And failed to express,
Was that I should grow up, Being myself,
Living my life in such a way, That of me,
Someone else some day Might say,
She is somebody.

DISADVANTAGED

We had a wonderful time, I think,
When we were growing up,
All we could eat from our garden
And milk from our cow to drink.
I learned to sew, cook, knit and crochet,
Each brother learned a trade,
Whatever we wanted, and did not have,
We did without, or made.
Our home was filled with music,
These lessons were decreed.
There were chores to do, and homework too,
And always books to read.
Each night there were prayers before bedtime, And
before any meal could begin
My father would read from the Bible,
Then we'd play a concert of hymns.
There was constant advice, which was enforced,
Of how we should behave—
A credit first to our family name,
And then of course to the race.
How enriched I thought our lives to be,
It always seemed that way to me,
So imagine my surprise to find,
We were the disadvantaged of that time.

FEELINGS

I wonder what feelings look like?
Are the happy ones large and round?
Are the sad ones flat, oblong or square?
Are the funny ones shaped like clowns?
Are the feelings of love fluffy and soft?
Could it be they are shaped like hearts?
Pride, prejudice, greed and fear,
I wonder what color they are;
What of the feeling of being me,
That is, the person inside.
Am I tall, fat, white, black—
What does my me look like.
No matter the size, the shape or the hue,
Of whatever the feelings may be,
Deep inside where our feelings are,
I look like you, you look like me.

Family Memories











~ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ~

*On behalf of the family of **A. Lillian Thompson**, we extend our deepest gratitude to the Tuskegee community and to everyone who showed love, kindness, and care. Because of your support, she was able to live independently and with dignity until her peaceful passing at the beautiful age of 105.*

We are profoundly thankful for every prayer, every flower, every expression of love, and every act of comfort shared with us during this time. Your thoughtfulness has been a source of strength and a true reflection of the love that surrounds our family.

With love and appreciation,

The Family of A. Lillian Thompson



Professional Services Entrusted To

McKenzie's Funeral Home, Inc.

1509 Notasulga Road

Tuskegee, AL 36083

334-727-1750