



## Matilda Rivers

December 25, 1942 - January 21, 2024

Mrs. Matilda Rivers 81 passed away Sunday, January 21, 2024 at home surrounded by her loving family under the care of Gentiva Hospice. Funeral service will be held 12pm Monday, January 29, 2024 at Clifton Baptist 100 Big Hill Road. Interment Cherokee Hill Cemetery

Matilda Wiley Rivers, fondly known as Tillie, graced the world on December 25, 1942 in Garden City, GA.

Born to the late Herman Wiley Sr. and Florence Gibbons Wiley, her journey through life was marked by

achievements and a profound dedication to family, community and a love for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tillie's educational path led her to Tompkins High School, where she not only shone as Ms. Tompkins

High School Queen, she also graduated as the Salutatorian in 1960. She then went on to graduate from

Savannah State College with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Accounting and Home Economics in 1965.

It was during her high school years that she crossed paths with her sweetheart, Johnnie Rivers, a love

story that endured beyond high school. The couple shared a passion for music, attending concerts at the

Apollo Theatre in Harlem, NY featuring legends like James Brown, Marvin Gaye and Jackie Wilson. Her

favorite song was "I Feel Good" by James Brown. They were wedded on October 24, 1965 leading to a 57

year lifelong journey together.

Their inseparable connection laid the foundation for Rivers Soul Food Restaurant in Hartford, CT

established in 1967 in partnership with her in-laws. This endeavor became a family affair with the support

of her brothers. As the head chef and partner, Tillie dedicated over 25 years to serving the community

with love and generosity. No one left their restaurant hungry.

Tillie's benevolence extended beyond the kitchen. She made her home a destination for her nieces,

nephews and grandkids during summers, treating them as her own and showering them with love.

Caregiving for her mother and mother-in-law further exemplified her selflessness. As a mother of six, Tillie

was devoted, patient, and ensured her family's strong support system, fostering a tradition of birthday

calls among her children.

Her devotion as a wife was unparalleled. When Johnnie worked as a 3rd shift driver in Savannah, Tillie

would keep him company over the phone in the middle of the night, demonstrating her unwavering love

and commitment.

In 1991, Johnnie and Matilda made their way back home to Savannah. Here Tillie contributed to the

family businesses, Rivers Rollin' Diner and Cafe Florie. Baking sweet potato pies, cakes, and desserts to

sell at Farmer Markets, she assisted her daughter and nephew in their restaurant and bakery. Tillie knew

3

her way around a kitchen, her Thanksgiving dinners were a testament to her culinary prowess, as she

worked tirelessly to create memorable feasts.

Her strength, will, and tenacity was evident in 2013, when she faced a severe health crisis where the

doctors said there was no hope. She defied expectations by surviving another decade.

Her devoted

husband and daughter served as her primary caregivers during these challenging but inspiring years.

She was loved by everyone she encountered, and she loved them back even harder. Tillie was a giving

person and always made sure everyone was taken care of. She would ask if "you were alright" and if you

had enough.

On Sunday, January 21st, surrounded by her cherished family, Matilda Rivers departed this world. She joins her parents, brothers Herman Wiley Jr and Richard Wiley, and sister Marie Simmons in eternal peace. To carry on Matilda's legacy, is her loving husband Johnnie Rivers of Garden City, GA. Brother, Raymond Wiley (Willis Mae) of Hartford, CT. Sons, Anthony Rivers (Renée) Dunwoody, GA, Johnny Rivers (Loretta) of Buford, GA, Jonathan Rivers of Hartford, CT, Jermaine Rivers of Newark, NJ, Daughters Waishana Freeman (Seth) of West Hartford, CT, and Latoya Rivers of Garden City, GA. Grandchildren: Camille Moore (Jeffrey) of Smyrna, GA, Chella Rivers of Pittsburgh, PA, Xavier "Tre" Rivers Riverdale, GA, Jamir Freeman and Zuri Freeman of West Hartford, CT, Specials Sisters in Love, Verna Lee Smith and Mary Liz Rivers and the late Charity Rivers along with a host of cousins, nieces, nephews, great grand nieces and nephews, and friends that will cherish her memories. Tillie will be profoundly missed by all who had the privilege of encountering her remarkable presence. Her giving nature, warmth, and love will forever be remembered by those she touched.

# Previous Events

## Walk Thru Viewing

JAN **28**. 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Bonaventure Funeral Home  
2520 Bonaventure Road  
Savannah, GA 31404

## Homegoing Service

JAN **29**. 12:00 PM (ET)

Clifton Baptist Church  
100 Big Hill Rd  
Savannah, GA 31408  
(912) 964-2335

# Tribute Wall

CH

“ Deepest sympathies to you family, praying for your strength as you walk the last mile of the way with your beloved. I will always remember cousin Tilleys sweet smile. RIP Cousin. Cynthia Hamilton

Cynthia Hamilton - January 28, 2024 at 02:16 PM

BS

“ Bernard & Freyda Sawyer purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Matilda Rivers.



Bernard & Freyda Sawyer - January 27, 2024 at 02:18 PM

A+

“ Amy, Ellen, Loreen & Bette Myerson + families purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Matilda Rivers.



Amy, Ellen, Loreen & Bette Myerson + families - January 27, 2024 at 11:13 AM

A+

“ Amy, Ellen, Loreen & Bette Myerson + families planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Matilda Rivers.

Amy, Ellen, Loreen & Bette Myerson + families - January 27, 2024 at 11:13 AM

JL

“ Jon and Angela Love purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Matilda Rivers.



Jon and Angela Love - January 27, 2024 at 08:19 AM

JL

“ Jon and Angela Love planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Matilda Rivers.

Jon and Angela Love - January 27, 2024 at 08:19 AM



“ Gracious Lavender Basket was purchased for the family of Matilda Rivers.



January 26, 2024 at 09:45 PM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Matilda Rivers.



January 26, 2024 at 09:15 PM

YC

“ Your MarriedMin.Family at Victory Church planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Matilda Rivers.

Your MarriedMin.Family at Victory Church - January 26, 2024 at 09:15 PM

LJ

“ Lisa Johnson purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Matilda Rivers.



Lisa Johnson - January 26, 2024 at 07:10 PM

MF

“ MPS Family purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Matilda Rivers.



MPS Family - January 26, 2024 at 03:34 PM

TT

“ *The Clemons Family (friends of Tony) purchased the Beautiful i  
n Blue for the family of Matilda Rivers.*



---

**The Clemons Family (friends of Tony)** - January 26, 2024 at 09:58 AM

NM

“ *May God grant you peace and comfort for the days ahead. Mrs Tillie will be  
missed. Our families were connected for years as we lived next door on the 5  
mile bend in Garden City, I remember the summer visits growing up with her kids  
especially her boys.*

*Be encouraged family we love y'all.*

*The Bates Family ( Linnie, Pam, Nat)*

---

**Natalyn Bates Morris** - January 26, 2024 at 09:24 AM

EP

*Tony, John John, Johnathan, Jermaine, Shaina & Toya,  
There are no words to express my heartfelt condolences to all of you. Your mother was  
such a kind, sweet and humble woman. I will cherish the memories of our families  
spending time with each other during the summer break on Wheathill Road. Enjoying  
the good food that Tilly, Marie and Ms. Florence would fill our souls with. I'm sure they  
are all sharing their best dishes with the Lord. Although we're all grown and living our  
lives, we never forget where we came from and how we're forever connected. Ms. Tilly  
lived life against all odds. She finished her assignment here on earth, and the Lord  
called her home to rest. Take comfort in knowing she's resting in the arms of Our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ. Lifting you up in prayer. Peace & Blessings. Love you family,  
Cookie*

---

**Elaine Patterson** - January 29, 2024 at 01:00 AM

CS

“ *Carol, Ken, Jennie, Sarat, Kate, Seb purchased the Pink Tribut  
e Spray for the family of Matilda Rivers.*



---

**Carol, Ken, Jennie, Sarat, Kate, Seb** - January 25, 2024 at 10:41 PM

ES

“ Erica & Mother JoAnn Sawyer purchased the Simply Elegant S pathiphyllum for the family of Matilda Rivers.



Erica & Mother JoAnn Sawyer - January 25, 2024 at 01:11 PM

TR

“ Toyin & Ann Raji purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Matilda Rivers.



Toyin & Ann Raji - January 24, 2024 at 10:21 PM

TS

“ To the Rivers family

*Miss Rivers will truly be missed. I remember she allowed me to do the girls here when they were younger. Take you guys rollerskating in the Cadillac. Your family was my second family. She will definitely be missed by many. If there's anything I can do, I'm here for you. Love your other sister Terri Bradford-Sims*

Terri Sims - January 24, 2024 at 08:33 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Matilda Rivers.



January 24, 2024 at 07:27 PM



“ Lavender Reflections Spray was purchased for the family of Matilda Rivers.



January 24, 2024 at 12:57 PM

RF

“ *Ruth, Babatunji, Andre, Paul & families planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Matilda Rivers.*

---

**Ruth, Babatunji, Andre, Paul & families** - January 24, 2024 at 12:57 PM