



Mrs. Roberta Cheney

August 31, 1916 - July 3, 2011

Roberta Cheney was born August 31, 1916 to Luther and Georgia (Crawford) Spotster in Chicago, IL. She was the youngest of four children: Marie, Inez and Nathaniel, who all preceded her in death. Roberta graduated from Sherwood Elementary School and attended Englewood High School for three years. At the opening of DuSable High School, Roberta transferred there and graduated with high honors. After graduation, Roberta enrolled at Wilson Junior College where she excelled in all her courses, especially English. She enjoyed being a part of student government activities. She was class president and graduated with honors. She briefly attended the University of Chicago, but during this time the Great Depression and the lack of finances forced her to drop out and seek employment. The city of Chicago opened civil service exams for the first time in ten years, so Roberta took and passed the exam for the Junior Clerk of the Chicago Public Library (CPL). She worked for CPL until 1944. She then was appointed clerk at the Lundbloom High School. Roberta married Charles Cheney ("Chuck") and they bought a farm in Cassopolis, Michigan. Roberta and Charles loved every aspect of farm life, but small farmers were being overwhelmed by large commercial farms. They sold all their livestock and Charles took a job in South Bend, Indiana at the Studebaker Auto Plant. Charles took early retirement and then worked independently. Roberta enrolled in classes at WMU majoring in Library Science, while working part-time at the Cass County Library. She won a scholarship from the Michigan State Library and earned BA and MA degrees.

Roberta's communication and organizational skill prepared her to be an extraordinary public servant. She then became head of Cass County Library where she worked from 1962-1971. Charles passed away in 1968, and she moved to Kalamazoo to organize and open Powell Branch Library. She retired in 1982. Roberta was also a member of the Kalamazoo Valley Board of Trustees from 1973-1990 (vice chairwomen), founder of Alma Powell Library; a Bible Baptist Church member, American Red Cross volunteer, on the Kalamazoo Housing Board of Appeals, participated in Kalamazoo County Head Start, and participated in the Family Visitor Program and Big Sister Program (both part of the former Department of Social Services). She was also involved with Shepherd's Center of Greater Kalamazoo, Northside Association for Education Advancement, American Association of University Women, Delta Kappa Gamma, and Nation Women Educator's Honor Society. Roberta has always been a part of community services. Roberta was awarded the Michigan Library Association Librarian of the Year in 1972, and also the Stars Award's Irving Gilmore Lifetime Achievement Award, in 2000. Roberta traveled extensively overseas during vacation time and after retirement. She traveled all throughout the United States and to foreign countries such as England, Spain, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Canada, and the Caribbean. Roberta leaves behind one daughter, Angela Taylor Perry (Raymond); three grandchildren: Chaz (Latoya); Austin (Nikki); and Georgia Taylor; one great grandchild, Austin Taylor Jr.; and a great many nieces and nephews.

Previous Events

Service

JUL 7. 12:00 PM (ET)

Bible Baptist Church
1700 N. Drake Road
Kalamazoo, MI

Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Roberta Cheney*

October 23, 2023 at 06:06 AM



“ *Mrs. Roberta Cheney*

October 06, 2023 at 10:42 AM



“ *Sorry to hear of Mrs Cheney's home going. She was my Grandmothers (Bessie Jackson) best friend. Always a very nice lady. My Prayers to the Family. God Bless..... Tony M. Thompson*

Tony M. Thompson - August 04, 2011 at 05:11 AM