



Rose Rhetta

July 10, 1917 - January 30, 2022

Rose Rhetta transitioned this life on January 30, 2022, after living a full and motivating 104 years young.

Born in Greenport, New York to Leon and Irene Sells, Rose was the eldest girl of six children. She became an ardent and life-long student in all things academic including foreign languages, science, music, and the arts. Primary and secondary schooling included mastering Latin, French as well as the piano, and the French horn. A school memory she often recalled involved the traditional high school field trip to Washington DC. Strict segregation laws required her to stay in separate boarding facilities during the trip. However, in a twist of fate, her stay at the YWCA allowed her to meet and have breakfast every morning with Carter G. Woodson, the renowned African American author and scholar, who lived at the YW during his teaching residency at Howard University. Her stay and meeting with Mr. Woodson was an unexpected positive from what could easily have been a very negative experience.

Accepted into Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) in Virginia as a member of the class of 1939, she entered and graduated from the School of Nursing and embarked on her professional occupation as a Registered Nurse. In 1941 she married her fellow Hamptonian Henry S. Rhetta Sr. and within a few years they settled in St. Louis, MO. Their union produced three children Henry Jr, Duane, and Jane. Continuing the drive for higher learning, she entered and graduated with a master's degree in occupational therapy from

Washington University and went on to practice as a Registered Occupational Therapist at Alton State Hospital. She earned yet another degree at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville that qualified her to be a school counselor and teacher within the Alton School system.

She believed her secret to a long and productive life was to work hard in a career you enjoy. Ultimately, she noted, such efforts would keep the mind and body strong, sharp, and ready to meet any challenge.

A devoted member of Central Baptist Church in St. Louis, MO. for over 75 years, she was also a dedicated member of the Chancel Choir.

Her civic community and social affiliations included the Busy Fingers Sewing Club, Alton IL, The Allen Singers, the Elijah P. Lovejoy Memorial as well as a lifetime membership with the NAACP and the NCNW.

She is preceded in death by her husband Henry, two brothers, a sister and several cousins.

She leaves to cherish her memory, children Henry Jr, Duane and Jane; grandchildren Steven and Lauren; great granddaughters Rachel and Michel, brother Reginald, sister Ernestine as well as an extend family of nieces, nephews and cousins.

Cemetery Details

St. Peters Cemetery

St.Louis, MO