



Velma Cockrell

December 24, 1936 - February 28, 2011

Born on Christmas Eve in the midst of the Great Depression in 1936, in Six, West Virginia, Velma was the first child and daughter of her parents Charlie and Anna Buford Cockrell. A strong, precocious and energetic child, Velma was academically bright and always enthusiastic about learning. Raised in the rural coal mining town of Glen Rodgers, West Virginia, she was educated from grade school to high school in Wyoming County Public Schools and attended Scott High School. A child of God fearing parents, Velma learned the value of hard work as she watched her parents struggle to keep food on the table during America's worst and longest economic disaster. She worked alongside her mother and father, learning farming and domestic skills and offered great support to her younger siblings Charlie and Carlee. During these early years, she learned the value of family and the importance of caring for loved ones.

After high school, Velma remained in Glen Rodgers. She was an attentive and youthful mother. With a determination to make a better life for her family she cared for her 3 sons and was expecting her first daughter Selma when she found herself grief stricken upon learning that the father of her children was suddenly killed in a coal mining accident in December 1957. Distraught from the reality of raising four children alone and by the lack of jobs from the closing of the local coal mines, which was the main source, Velma, armed with the strong work ethic instilled by her parents, refused to be defeated. She became even more determined and set her sights on making a better life for

her family.

In December of 1958, after reading a Job Wanted ad in the local Glen Rodgers newspaper for domestic employment on Long Island, Velma got on a bus and headed for New York. Upon arriving at the interview all dressed up, Velma quickly learned that the job was not for domestic work but was instead for work in the potato fields. Knowing Velma, one can only imagine the look she gave upon finding out. But all was not lost. It was here that she met Harry and Ruth Sarve who were looking for a domestic housekeeper. Her inner strength, vitality and vivacious personality enabled them to form an instant bond and Velma was hired. She knew that if she worked hard, she could not only open doors for herself but could rescue her entire family from hardship in West Virginia. With newspaper in hand, Velma began looking for work everywhere she could. Determined to unite with her family, Velma worked 7 days per week as a sleep-in, 5 days per week for the Sarve's and also worked weekends at various events and venues throughout Long Island. For Velma, working 12 to 16 hour days were commonplace. The Sarve's encouraged Velma to read books which was instrumental to her growth. Also, they allowed her to continue her education which she gladly embraced.

Velma's life was invested in her family. She was a matriarch in the making. After working hard and saving every dollar she could, Velma assisted in relocating her entire family to Long Island. Laid off from the mines, she first sent for her father and then her brother and helped them to find work. Soon after, her mom, children and sister, Carlee joined them on Long Island. In November of 1963, Velma purchased her first home with Andrew Jackson Lee in Huntington Station, NY and moved her entire extended family into a one-bath, two-bedroom home for the first 6 months. With her family finally united, Velma then took a part-time job at Woodbury Nursing Home while still working for the Sarve's. She developed a strong interest in healthcare. While at Woodbury, she took the NY State exam and was hired at Kings Park Psychiatric Hospital. Given her love for children, is transferred to Sagamore Children's Psychiatric Center two years later. She worked two jobs for over 15

years. Over the years, she grew her family to eight. Although difficult, she did whatever was needed to support her family, always working, never seeking assistance. Every child had at least 5 outfits for the school year.

With over 30 years of service as Ward Charge for Sagamore Children's Psychiatric Center, Velma retired. A true matriarch, Velma's focus was now dedicated to her grandchildren and great-grands. Even at 74, her playful spirit and youthfulness always made her assessable to young people as attested by her avidly using SKYPE as a preferred means to communicate with family. If you ever wonder about what type of grandmother she was, just ask any of her grand's. Current on most issues and pop culture, Velma eager to beat you at playing a game of Cooncan, 500 Rummy, Spades, Bid Whist, Texas Hold 'em, or Monopoly. Velma was a great cook, but her specialty was baking an obvious metaphor for kneading her family together. Her joy of celebrating and sharing with family was not limited to major holidays but was every day of the year. Her interests also included football and anything her grand and great grandchildren were interested in. She will be missed by all who knew and loved her.

On Monday, February 28, 2011, while relaxing at home, Velma quietly slipped away. Preceded by her parents Charlie and Anna Cockrell, her brother Charlie and sister Carlee, Velma is survived by her beloved eight children and 19 grandchildren: John Cockrell and wife Denise and their children Dawn, Kahalil and Taylor of Haymarket, VA; Franklin Cockrell and wife Beatrice and their children Marlina, Cullen and Kristen of Milton, MA; Steven Cockrell and his children Roslyn, Ronson and Brianna of Central Islip, NY; Selma Cockrell and her children Stanley and Jamar Lewis of Lakeland, FL; Kieth Cockrell and wife Serena and their children Ross, Ciera and Anna of Detroit, MI, Andrew Lee and wife Natlian and their children Andrew, Aaron, Asya and Austin of Manassas, VA, Lorraine Harris of Manassas, VA and her son Benjamin, Jeffrey

Lee of Long

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Beach, CA and his daughter Marquita. Velma also leaves 9 great grandchildren: Danaiya Byrams, Kaylah Lewis, Kameron Lewis, Kevin Lewis, Justus Edwards, Jaziah Edwards, Jai Edwards, Jakai Edwards and Andrew Smits. God has made room in the heavens and called Velma home.

The family will receive friends from 12:00-2:00 P.M. Saturday, March 5, 2011 at Pierce Funeral Home, 9609 Center St. Manassas where funeral services will be held 2:00 P.M. Saturday. Interment will follow at Woodbine Cemetery, Manassas, VA

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Tribute Wall

GS

“ We will miss Grandma. She treated us as though we were her own.
We love you Grandma!

Gia, Kriss & Gabrielle Smith - March 29, 2013 at 02:00 PM

DC

“ My thoughts and prayers go out to you and your family at this time.

Love your friend

Denise

Denise M Christmas - March 29, 2013 at 02:00 PM

J(

“ I was so sad to hear of Velma's passing. I worked with her at Sagamore Children' hospital and I will never forget how she would crush me at scrabble! She was a strong woman and if she took you under her wing, you knew you were protected. My deepest sympathy goes out to her family.....Jeannie

Jean La Valle (Maroney) - March 29, 2013 at 02:00 PM