



## Willie Lee Childs

September 12, 1923 - May 23, 2019

God's Angel Willie Lee Irving was born on September 12, 1923 in Canton, Mississippi to Morris Irving Sr. and Gertrude Campbell. Willie had one older sister Emma Lee and two younger brothers Morris Jr. and David L. Some time after David was born Willie's life changed forever with the passing of her mother Gertrude. The family relocated to Warren, Arkansas where Willie and her siblings grew up. Morris Sr. then relocated to California to look for work. Once he had secured employment he sent for his children. Willie began her new life as a young adult in San Francisco, California working for the Southern Pacific Railroad as a Coach Cleaner. She found lodging on Verona Place at a Rooming House. A residential hotel with a community bathroom. One day while walking back to her room from the bathroom she came across a young man in an Army uniform who was taken by her natural beauty. In an effort to not let the opportunity to meet this young lady go by, he simply said, "Hello" to which she replied a cordial but sassy, "Hi". They introduced themselves and she continued to her room. After the meeting he remarked to a friend, "I'm gonna marry that girl!" That handsome young man was James Edward Childs Sr. Over the following months they got more acquainted and fell in love. James decided he wanted to make Willie his wife, but there was only one problem, he wasn't old enough! After telling her he was of age, he finally revealed he was only 17 and had to write home to his mother Maybell to get written permission to marry this beautiful older woman (by three years). His mother gave him her blessing and they were married July 26, 1946. They welcomed their first child, a son James Jr. in 1947, a daughter Gail in 1952, and another daughter Deborah in 1958. Around 1965, Willie retired from the Southern Pacific Railroad and supported her family as a housewife and domestic worker. She worked for only two families for many years. She always had one unwavering passion in her life and that was her love of God! It was said that even as a little girl her relationship with God was unbreakable. Throughout all of her life's journey she held onto her faith. Early in her marriage she joined Saint John Missionary Baptist Church, then located at 720 Filbert Street in Oakland. This dynamic church was literally moved to 1909 Market Street where it still stands until this day. Reverend Carl J. Anderson was her beloved Pastor until his passing in 2000. Every morning she could be found on her knees next to her bed praying and communing with God! There was an unwritten rule that you did not "Mess with

Momma” while she was saying her prayers for any reason! In 2009, her beloved husband was reunited with God. It was shortly after that she was diagnosed with dementia, which was an adjustment for the family. But, it also brought out more of her humorous side. For example, she remained 89 years old for at least 3 years! In 2018, she began attending the Institute on Aging. She would often remark that it was an opportunity to “Catch her a husband”, but those dreams were shattered when she lost her teeth at school one day. Unfortunately they were never recovered. Willie lived out her last days in her own home and was well cared for by her family and caregivers who treated her as if she were their mother! She is preceded in death by her parents, siblings, nieces, nephews and granddaughter Arlicia. She leaves behind to cherish her memory, her children: James Jr., Gail and Deborah; her grandchildren: Chantel, Vincent, and Tiffany; great-grandchildren: Anaya, Christina, Tajah, Tamisha, Jasmine, Zaire, Terrell (Arlicia’s son), Emerald, Xavier, Pearl, Xander, and a host of other relatives and friends.