



Iola Mae Harding

October 30, 1923 - March 14, 2019

Iola Mae Harding was born October 30, 1923 in Wetumpka, Alabama to Lovie and Tarsus Knox. While Iola was very young her parents moved to Chicago, Illinois. However, Iola was left with her maternal grandparents John Sr. and Ester Martin who raised her as their own child until the death of her grandmother which occurred about six years later.

When Iola's grandmother died Iola's mother (a complete stranger to Iola) came to get her and brought her to Chicago. Shortly thereafter, Iola's father died. Later her mother married Raymond Martin (unrelated to grandparents). All of this took place within a three year period. Iola adjusted well.

Iola loved going to school. She graduated from Wendell Phillips High School on January 30, 1942. She was awarded the Commercial Award, the Spanish Award, and the Citizenship Award. She was a member of the National Honor Society and also the valedictorian of her class. "This was the first time any student had been so notably honored by so many departments" stated the school newspaper.

Teachers and fellow classmates expected great worldly achievements of Iola, higher education, etc. But in 1941, two events occurred unexpectedly. First, April 15, 1941, Iola's mother died just nine months before Iola's graduation from high school. Second, a few months later Iola went to visit a former resident of the building where she lived who had gone to live with her sister.

While visiting, Iola observed the former neighbor's sister giving a book to a young person who was there. Iola said to her, "You didn't give me one of those books." She replied, "If I give you one, will you read it?" "YES", Iola answered. The lady explained they studied Bible publications at various places and times and asked her if she would like to go with her and her family. Iola agreed to go with them and she never stopped. This was Iola's first contact with Jehovah's Witnesses and in fact she had never heard of JW's. That was the latter part of 1941. The sister she met was the late Coleamer Straughn, who became Iola's spiritual mother.

Fatherless, and motherless, lola was at the time being housed and supported by uncles on both sides of her deceased parents. They were willing to assist with her education, but after attending one semester at the Wilson Junior College, after graduating January 1942, lola made up her mind that if she accepted such help she might feel obligated to try to live up to their expectations. Especially when one family member told her Jehovah's Witnesses are not going to feed you and take care of you. So, after spending the summer vacation from school working in her uncle's restaurant, lola did not return for the fall semester. Instead she obtained a different job, and on September 20, 1942, lola symbolized her dedication to Jehovah by water baptism.

On two separate occasions lola attended Wilson Junior College evening classes to increase her accounting knowledge. That gave her the ability to pass a civil service exam without having to get a degree in the field of accounting. As a result, lola went from a Clerk II to an Accountant I and later was upgraded to Accountant II.

lola firmly believed that Jehovah blessed her efforts. During the years when there were not enough brothers available, sisters were used as Literature and Account Servants. lola was privileged to serve as an account servant for nearly a decade.

On June 21, 1958, lola married William Earl Harding, Jr. About two years later William was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumor. The doctors inserted a by-pass in his head and he was treated with radiation. He became partially paralyzed on the right side and eventually lost his hearing. The doctors gave him a year to live. William never gave up and neither did lola. They were well known in the congregation territory, regularly out in the field ministry together. Their neighbor Mr. Walton (who later became a spiritual brother), often observed lola as she helped William manage high steps. He would holler out "Don't let him fall!" After all, he was only 6'3" tall.

lola and William had a good marriage. Each was able to understand how the other felt and neither complained. When William was asked how he was, he would say "I'm in good shape for the shape I'm in." lola would often respond the same way, "I'm in good shape for the shape I'm in." She always remembered what an elderly sister said to her when she was young. "lola always try to do things Jehovah's way." That helped her to be a better student, a better wife, bread winner, nurse, pioneer and a publisher and yet still remember that there is nothing that we have that we did not receive. Jehovah God extended King Hezekiah's life 15 years. William lived 20 years beyond general expectation, he died February 4, 1980.

Iola fell asleep in death early Thursday morning, March 14, 2019. Others of her immediate family that preceded her in death were her half-sisters Helen R. Martin (Cox), Evelyn L. Martin, and her half-brothers Frederick R. Martin and Phillip L. Martin (November 2015).

She leaves to cherish her memory her sister-in-law Beverly H. Turner; two nieces Beverly Gale and Jeri Turner; and a host of spiritual friends.

Events

MAR **Service** 03:00PM

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Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses (85th)
8515 South Ashland, Chicago, IL, US

Comments



“ 2 files added to the album Memories Album



McCullough Funeral & Cremation Services - March 19 at 09:59 PM