



Ms. Sonia L. Russell

February 2, 1991 - December 27, 2021

Sonia Lillie Russell, the shooting star and Ground Hog Day baby, plopped into this world and caused a splatter on Saturday, February 2, 1991 at 4:44 a.m. in Rush Presbyterian St. Luke Hospital's birthing room where the unsuspecting doctor bore the evidence of her presence on his face. Always with a dramatic flare, this "Lillie-of-the-Valley-Girl" always lived life with pizzazz.

Sonia loved the spotlight and grabbed every available moment to be the Center in a subdued fashion. Her dazzling smile and expressive eyes never failed to attract attention to which she was oblivious.

Her educational journey began at the home day care of Mrs. Kathryn Avery, who provided Sonia and her older brothers with a solid preschool education.

Sonia was the beloved darling of the day care. She provided Mr. Avery a constant subject to help him keep his photography skills on point and giving Sonia photographic documentation of her personal growth as a baby.

Sonia and her brothers made a brief detour to nursery school on their educational journey when they attended Humpty Dumpty Nursery School. The nursery school soon provided an after school program once they attended St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic School which she attended from kindergarten through eighth grade.

During her early years of grammar school, she began bowling, taking piano and dance lessons, activities she and her brothers thoroughly enjoyed participating in together.

Sonia's father, Ken, introduced Bowling to his children and was very active as their coach and mentor. Bowling was a rite of passage for the children of the Russell family. All of the Russell children (by birth or marriage) joined the Anchor Bowl Junior league bowling teams. All of them, especially Sonia, received many awards and accolades.

After graduating from St. Margaret of Scotland, she went on to attend Bloom Trail High School located in South Chicago Heights, IL. As the need to be seen in the spotlight of the stage, the acting bug sunk its teeth inside of Sonia's soul. From the time she performed in her first play in high school until she attended her Mother's alma mater SIU-C (Southern Illinois University - Carbondale), Sonia loved the whole aspect of theater. She learned how to build sets on stage as well as learning the nuances of acting on the stage.

DANCE, THE STORY OF My LIFE...

As bowling was the center force of activity for the Russell family, dance was another pastime and love for her Mother, who returned to dance alongside her children as a Mayfair Alumna. It soon became a passion. Sonia surfaced into the world of dance at the tender age of five at Mayfair Academy of Performing Arts, Inc. located on 79th and Dobson. She studied dance for 14 years at Mayfair where she excelled in dance, especially the genres of Tap, Modern Jazz and Hip Hop. Although Sonia took Ballet, it was not her strong suit as she had to focus and practice harder. Ballet was a more disciplined style of dance. For Sonia, free style forms of dance provided her a less restrictive way to creatively express herself via her choreography.

Sonia auditioned and was a member of Mayfair Performing Company for 10 years under the tutelage of Ms. Maria Lanier-Ware.

Sonia and her brother, Kenneth, became notable as two of the top students to grace the dance studios of Mayfair Academy and were making a name for themselves in the dance world. Tony award winner Savion Glover recognized the talent displayed by all three siblings. John wasn't as avid a dancer as his siblings as his interests geared toward bowling and honing his writing skills.

Sonia received numerous awards and scholarships including two Tap Scholarships at Mayfair Academy; several Joel Hall Dance Camp scholarships; five scholarships from the Chicago Human Rhythm Project for its dance festivals featuring many popular dance choreographers including Emmy Award winner Jason Samuels-Smith and Tony Award winners Savion Glover and Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, just to name a few.

Sonia competed in many dance competitions and has won Ultimate Gold (the highest honor) dance awards, first place awards and choreographer awards from the American Dance Awards Competition. She performed alongside her brother Kenneth with M.A.D.D. Rhythms Dance Company. She was selected by Hubbard Street Dance Company founder Lou Conte to perform his award winning choreography honoring Bill "Bojangles" Robinson to name a few. Sonia was featured on ABC Channel 7's "Someone You Should Know" segment who honored Bril Barrett for his M.A.D.D. Rhythms Tap Dance Academy. These opportunities were afforded to Sonia by Ms. Sherri Roach, her original Tap instructor, and the Director of Mayfair, Ms. Peggy Sutton. Ms. Peggy recognized Sonia's passion and natural ability during She mentored Sonia during her tenure at Mayfair and beyond.

Her most prized award was winning the Student Choreographer Award for her choreography in her dance entitled, "Mini Rock". Sonia had cemented her place as a budding dance professional.

Sonia's favorite dance performances were: the opportunity to show off her dance skills to Chris Brown and to be an opening act for professional and award winning violinist, Damien Escobar. Sonia's stage presence during that performance was enhanced by her older cousin, Andre, who gave her the motivation to overcome the stage fright that almost overwhelmed her. The skills in her litany of unblurred, clear-cut beats hammering the floor in a rhythmic frenzy of sounds blending into a blended melody with the music.

Sonia brought her life full circle when she returned to Mayfair Academy to teach. Teaching dance was such a passion for her. She didn't mind spending extra time helping her students who might need extra help with her choreography. She loved to teach the younger children who seemed to enjoy having Ms. Sonia teach them ballet and tap fundamentals.

Sonia created her own personal dance family while at Mayfair. She collected additional Moms, Dads, Aunts, Uncles, Sisters, Nephews and Nieces. Each individual knew they had made the cut when Sonia referred to them as family.

Sonia later decided after leaving Carbondale, she wanted to try a different aspect of life by signing up to be a Fire Fighter. In pursuing this endeavor, Sonia enrolled in the Black Fire Brigade's first EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) class. She really enjoyed it and did well.

While waiting to be called by CFD (Chicago Fire Department), Sonia worked several jobs totally unrelated to becoming a First Responder. She made wonderful friends on every job and enjoyed going to work. For Sonia, each day was an adventure at all of the jobs.

Sonia loved life and all it held. She picked up a new family member everywhere she went - the Bowling Community was no exception. Her subdued manner and friendly demeanor was a magnet to many who will truly love her through eternity.

Sonia crammed in many adventures, experiences and memories as her life would be brief on this Earth. She left a lasting impression wherever she went.

December 7, 2021 was the beginning of the end of this chapter of Sonia's unbelievably short life and equally short illness. She gave us enough warning to brace us for the inevitable that we all must face one day. Twenty days later, on December 27, 2021, Sonia gained her wings and soared to her destiny. Her work here was complete.

Sonia leaves to cherish her memory loving Mom, Robbie Cox-Russell, her devoted Father Cleophus K. Russell, her Bonus Mother Latonya Russell, her brothers, John E. Lee, Kenneth R. Russell, Cleophus A. Russell, and bonus brother Robert Palmore; Maternal Grandmother Lillie W. Cox, Paternal Grandmother Searcy Smith; Uncle Roderick (King Rod), Godmother Patricia Graham; Aunt Bertha (St. Louis, MO), Aunt LaVaughn (Southaven, MS), Aunt Mildred/Uncle James, (Starksville, MS) Aunt Landolph,(St. Louis, MO) Uncle Randolph/Aunt Jean (Corinth, MS) Aunt Wy (Pennsylvania); Aunt Arnita, Uncles Howard, Kevin (Dannella), Keith (Tamiko), Cousin/Siblings Jonathan, Lynnetta, Kevin, Sherise, Noah, Olivia,/Mariah, Brandon.

This is missing from Sonia obit

Sonia leaves to cherish her memory:

Her loving Mom, Robbie Cox-Russell; her devoted Father Cleophus K. Russell; her Bonus Mother Latonya Russell; her brothers, John E. Lee,

Kenneth R. Russell, Cleophus A. Russell, and bonus brother Robert Palmore; Maternal Grandmother Lillie W. Cox; Paternal Grandmother Searcy Smith; Uncle Roderick (King Rod); Godmother Patricia Graham; Aunt Bertha (St. Louis, MO), Aunt LaVaughn (Southaven, MS), Aunt Mildred/Uncle James (Starksville, MS), Aunt Landolph (St. Louis, MO), Uncle Randolph/Aunt Jean (Corinth, MS), Aunt Wy (Pennsylvania), Aunt Arnita, Uncles Howard, Kevin (Dannella), and Keith (Tamiko); Cousin/Siblings Jonathan, Lynnetta, Kevin, Sherise, Noah, Olivia, / Mariah, and Brandon, and a host of other relatives, and friends.

Cemetery Details

Holy Sepulchre Catholic Cemetery

6001 West 111th Street
Alsip, IL

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 6. 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM (CT)

McCullough Funeral & Cremation Services
851 East 75th Street
Chicago, IL 60619
(773) 488-8900
info@mcculloughfuneralservices.com

Visitation

JAN 7. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Sixth Grace Presbyterian Church
600 East 35th Street
Chicago, IL

Service

JAN 7. 11:00 AM (CT)

Sixth Grace Presbyterian Church
600 East 35th Street
Chicago, IL

Tribute Wall



“ *Ms. Sonia L. Russell*

October 04, 2023 at 06:11 PM



“ *Abiytuwb Israel purchased the Simply Elegant Sp
athiphyllum for the family of Ms. Sonia L. Russell.*



Abiytuwb Israel - January 06, 2022 at 02:39 AM



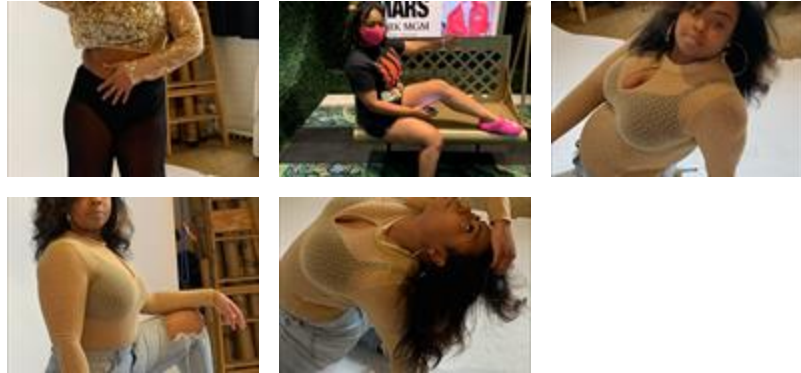
“ *Karen J. purchased the Medium Dish Garden for
the family of Ms. Sonia L. Russell.*



Karen J. - January 05, 2022 at 11:56 AM



“ 25 files added to the album Memories Album



McCullough Funeral & Cremation Services - January 05, 2022 at 07:41 AM



“ Sending prayers and condolences from Mrs. Jefferson from St. Margaret of Scotland School. I taught Sonia and her brother John. I remember Sonia used to say I always wanted her to be more like her brother John because he was so smart, but she was just joking with me. My prayers are with John, Kenneth and the rest of family at this difficult time. God bless you all.

Mrs. Jefferson - January 03, 2022 at 04:08 PM



“ Frito Lay - Windy City Zone purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Ms. Sonia L. Russell.



Frito Lay - Windy City Zone - January 03, 2022 at 12:34 PM