



## Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon

January 11, 1933 - January 12, 2020

Dorothy Louise Branch Cannon was an original. A way-having, hat-wearing storm of a woman, she had a huge personality, generous spirit and appetite to serve. Her impact and influence was felt throughout her native Rankin County and the entire state of Mississippi.

Dorothy Louise Branch was born to Ida Mitchell Branch and Eugie Branch in Brandon, MS on the 11th day of January in 1933. As a little girl, she would gather the neighborhood children to play school. She not only taught "her students": See Dick and Jane Run, but the Bible stories of David and Goliath and Jesus' birth. They called her "Mama Tutta", and she expected her young pupils to treat her as if she were really their teacher.

After her mother died when she was only 6 years-old, people in her community embraced her and recognized her intellectual gifts. They encouraged her to get an education. When she completed the eighth grade at the Brandon Colored School, as far as Black children could go in Rankin County, her family and community sent her to Holy Ghost High, a Catholic school in Jackson, MS. So enamored with Catholicism was young Dorothy that she considered becoming a nun - though she had already joined Rock Star Missionary Baptist Church in Brandon, MS when she was nine-years old. She graduated from Holy Ghost High School when she was 17-years old and was hired to teach in the two-room Pleasant Grove Community School in Brandon, MS. She remembers that some of the children were bigger and older than she was.

At night, she pursued a degree in early childhood education at then Jackson College. The young Ms. Branch abandoned the idea of becoming a nun, and married a dashing young man, also from Rankin County, Serphine Prentiss Cannon. A World War II veteran, he had attended the Prentiss Institute in Prentiss, MS and taught for a year before deciding it was not his calling. He was his wife's biggest cheerleader and the wind beneath her wings. Over the years, they would have five children ---- Gerri "Ann", Carole, Dwayne, Regina and Patrick.

When the "Colored" schools in Rankin County consolidated in 1959, Mrs. Cannon was hired to teach first grade at Carter High School, the facility built for the "Colored children in the county in defiance of the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education decision.

Mrs. Cannon had a passion for teaching her beloved "babies" as she called her students. She said that every child was teachable. Mrs. Cannon took her role as a teacher very seriously, and felt a cultural debt to the community that had supported her. Understanding that some children needed more than an education, she visited the homes of some with clothes and food so they would be prepared to perform their best academically. She also taught summer school and tutored students at her home in the afternoons and on weekends. But her position required that she do more than just serve her students. At that time, Black folks expected Black teachers to not only educate their children, but do everything else -- from being lay lawyers to grant writers to ambassadors, and Mrs. Cannon took it all on. To meet the area children's needs, she developed Summer Enrichment programs at Rock Star and Jerusalem Churches, where children could continue growing, get hot meals, and learn life skills.

While she taught school, she kept pursuing her own education, attaining both a Master's and Specialist degree in education from Jackson State University. In the mid-60s, she had special training at Bethune Cookman College and was chosen as one of two teachers to start a Head Start program in Mississippi.

She juggled her schooling, teaching and family life with her church work. She taught Sunday School and directed the Jr. Mission and Vacation Bible School at Rock Star, where she also wrote and directed plays for church programs. She was President of the United Usher's Association for many years and held leadership positions in the Springhill District Association and Women's Institute.

Sister Cannon felt a strong calling to expose as many people to Christ as possible. She traveled across the state, starting Good News Clubs. She also shared the gospel by guest speaking at Church and community spaces across the state. She was a gifted counselor and often prayed with people in her home prayer room. When thanked or complimented for speaking, Sister Cannon always bowed her head, pointed upward and said, "To God be the Glory.

She regularly represented her church as a delegate at the state Baptist Convention, as well as at community association and institutes. She received a special certificate for attendance at the Congress of Christian Education, National Baptist Association, USA.

She directed the education program at Jerusalem and was President of the Deaconess board when she transitioned. The church library was named for her and her husband, a deacon at Jerusalem.

During the 1969-70 school year, when the U.S. Justice Department finally enforced desegregation in Mississippi, the principal at Carter High School selected Mrs. Cannon as one of the Black teachers who would integrate Brandon Attendance Center schools. Yet, instead of giving her a classroom, her new principal put her in a supply closet with six Black students.

Mrs. Cannon could see the principal's shadow as she paced outside her closet door, eavesdropping on her class. When people told her that she should complain about having been put into a supply closet, she replied: "I'm just going to shut my door and

teach. And leave it in the hands of the Lord."

Because of what the principal heard and observed, the next school year, the principal assigned Mrs. Cannon to a classroom and placed the children of many of the county's most prominent white leaders in her class. She would teach at Stevens Elementary for 20 years. Although teaching had been her great passion, she decided to impact education by moving into administration. Mrs. Cannon was named principal at North West Rankin Middle School in 1990, and would remain in that position until she retired in 1994.

Mrs. Cannon's contribution to education has been extensive. Over the years, she received numerous honors, citations and awards. Among them were Mississippi State Teacher of the Year Finalist and Star Teacher. On a daily basis, her students, some doctors, lawyers, judges, teachers, professors, writers, scientists, would come up and share with her the powerful impact that she had on their lives.

Mrs. Cannon had not tired of education when she retired, but wanted to spend more time with her husband. They traveled and spent time with their granddaughters and had a food delivery ministry until he was called home in 1997. Mrs. Cannon kept herself busy with civic work, serving on the Rankin County Hospital board, Central MS Library System's board, President of Rankin County Retired Teachers and member of the Rankin County Executive Democratic Committee.

Mrs. Cannon was lured out of retirement to help Mt Elam MB Church start the Mt Elam Preparatory School in Pearl, MS. She was delighted to teach the children and grandchildren of her former students. She was known there for her signature greeting, "It's a good day!"

In the pursuit of social justice, she remained active with the NAACP and Concerned Citizens of Rankin County. Her work never done, she continued speaking engagements throughout Rankin County.

Proceeding her in death: Her Beloved Husband, Serphine Prentiss Cannon, her parents, Ida and Eugie Branch, and her siblings: JB Thompson, Lee Estus

Myles, Bessie Mae Williams, Sydney L. Branch, Lillie Thompson, Ida Spann,  
Louis Branch

She leaves behind to fulfill her legacy: Her Children - Dr. Gerri Cannon-Smith (Kenneth), of Brandon, Mississippi Carole Cannon and, Dwayne Cannon both of Brandon, Mississippi, Regina Cannon of Atlanta, Georgia, Patrick Cannon (Jackie); of Brandon, Mississippi: Grandchildren - Ayana Smith of Brandon, Mississippi, Ayesha Smith of Washington, DC, Sheriden Cannon and McKenzie Cannon of Brandon, Mississippi; Mozelle King (Talmadge) who was like a daughter to her of Oakland, CA, agodson, Baxter Evans of Clinton, Mississippi, and a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, friends and colleagues.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JAN 18. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

Dean Memorial Funeral Home  
745 Highway 468  
Brandon, MS 39042  
(601) 825-3884  
<https://deanmemorialfuneralhome.com/>

## Service

JAN 19. 1:00 PM (CT)

TrueVine M. B. Church  
124 Vine Drive  
Brandon, MS 39042

# Tribute Wall



“ *A'smile Alexander lit a candle in memory of Dorothy Cannon*



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**A'smile Alexander** - February 25, 2023 at 10:40 AM



“ *Lloyd B Collier lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Lloyd B Collier** - June 23, 2021 at 09:26 PM



“ *Wow, that's great. Mrs. Cannon was my first grade teacher in 1987 at Stevens Elementary School in Brandon. I remember she was an awesome lady and I always wondered what happened to her... how she lived the rest of her life. I wished we could have crossed paths before her passing. I remember her kindness and her gentleness. Such a blessing that she lived such a full life.*

*I am now a financial advisor in Memphis, TN with a wife of 15 years and two kids of my own.*

*- Josh Murphey*

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**Josh Murphey** - January 21, 2020 at 10:15 AM

SS

“When you read, say your words well. Say the words that you see and keep on reading. You can do it!”

-Mrs. Cannon



*To God be the glory for His grace, for bestowing such a beautiful presence and loving woman of God to touch the lives of those she encountered in some special way. Truly, God's grace is sufficient!*

*My first grade teacher, Mrs. Cannon, is my favorite teacher. She taught me how to read fluently and with expression by modeling a love for reading before her first grade students, while teaching us how to behave with her gentle manner, kindness, and encouraging words. Three years ago, she offered words of encouragement at a homegoing celebration. As she spoke, I listened intently like the student in her first grade class. Remembering my name, she hugged me all the same, bringing back memories of the teacher whose name would appear in the acknowledgment section of my dissertation. The title, without a doubt, would be reading education; I am still inspired to do my best work thanks to my teacher, Mrs. Cannon. I hope and pray that Mrs. Cannon's rest is sweet and peaceful, for she finished her course well, with an A . I love you, Mrs. Cannon!*

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**Samecia Stokes** - January 19, 2020 at 11:49 AM

LS

“Please know that Mrs. Cannon has left an AWESOME LEGACY for Rankin county and beyond!!!! Her wisdom and knowledge will forever live in the mind and heart of so many!!! GOD BLESS THE CANNON FAMILY!!!!

*Lillie Taylor Scott  
Charlotte, NC*

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**Lillie Taylor Scott** - January 18, 2020 at 09:03 PM

LS

“ *Lillie Taylor Scott lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Lillie Taylor Scott** - January 18, 2020 at 08:58 PM

DJ

“ *Debbie Jenkins lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Debbie Jenkins** - January 18, 2020 at 04:59 PM

BB

“ *Bonni Mangum Blackmon lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Bonni Mangum Blackmon** - January 17, 2020 at 03:38 PM

MM

“ *Monica McCoy lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Monica McCoy** - January 17, 2020 at 03:01 PM

LN

“ I'm so very sorry for your loss. Thoughts and Prayers are with you and your family now and the days ahead. God bless!

Linda Nesline - January 17, 2020 at 08:21 AM

KH

“ Condolences.

Kristi Holmes - January 17, 2020 at 04:52 AM

EW

“ Our hearts and prayers are with you during this difficult time. Love you all.  
- The Winsley Family.

Edna Winsley - January 16, 2020 at 08:31 PM

MT

“ Mary Trigg-Griffin lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon



Mary Trigg-Griffin - January 16, 2020 at 07:46 PM

ML

“ Mr. And Mrs Gary J Lockett lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon



Mr. and Mrs Gary J Lockett - January 16, 2020 at 12:19 PM

MS

“ Mrs. Cannon, a jewel of a lady that wore many hats. As an educator, she won the distinction of being excellent in her field. She was highly intelligent, soft spoken and articulated on levels befitting for the elite; always honoring God first. When Dorothy spoke, we listened. She was a trailblazer and mentor for many. Brandon schools and the Brandon, MS area will forever remember this friend to mankind and education. Rest well, our friend. ~ Maxine Morris Spurlock

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**Maxine Morris Spurlock** - January 16, 2020 at 11:51 AM

TL

“ Please forgive me family. I do wish you all continued strength at this time and in the days & weeks ahead. I truly hate my schedule is unbendable to be there physically but know my thoughts and prayers are with you always. Aunt Branch will forever be missed but never forgotten. ❤️



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**Tiffany D. Lockley** - January 15, 2020 at 11:15 PM

TL

“ Aunt Branch, I'm gonna miss our talks, your encouraging words and your smile. I'm so happy you've gained your wings and among those who you missed the most even though I know you disliked leaving everyone else behind. Well please tell everyone hello for me and until our spirits meet again on the other side of Jordan. I'll love & miss you dearly Tiffany Lockley💕



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**Tiffany D. Lockley** - January 15, 2020 at 11:05 PM

NK

“ *Natalie Keyes lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Natalie Keyes** - January 15, 2020 at 09:48 PM



“ *Faye Kitchens lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Faye Kitchens** - January 15, 2020 at 07:57 PM

EW

“ *Eletha Walker lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Eletha Walker** - January 15, 2020 at 07:56 PM

JH

“ *Mrs. Cannon was there for me when my father died in 1993. Loved working with her at Northwest Rankin. Loved that lady! She has left you with a wonderful Christian heritage. Continue her legacy. Jan Hughes*

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**Jan Hughes** - January 15, 2020 at 07:49 PM

DR

“ *Dannette Reuben lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Dannette Reuben** - January 15, 2020 at 02:12 PM

MG

“ *To The Cannon Family -  
May God continue to give you peace and his  
loving presence during the days to come.  
Mrs. Cannon will be missed by everyone. God  
Bless!*



*Mrs. Dixie Grant and Family*

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**Mrs Dixie Grant** - January 15, 2020 at 01:58 PM

EC

“ *2 Timothy 4:7, 8 I have fought a good fight, I  
have finished my course, I have kept the faith:  
Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of  
righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous  
judge, shall give me at that day: and not to  
me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.  
Mrs. Cannon's beautiful enduring smile and gracious spirit will truly  
be missed. She was a rare Proverbs 31 lady. Praying that our Lord  
Jesus Christ will comfort you in the days ahead. Elaine Coleman*



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**Elaine Coleman** - January 15, 2020 at 10:21 AM

MC

“ *Mary S Carr lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Mary S Carr** - January 14, 2020 at 10:51 PM

SH

“ *Shirley Porter Harper lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Shirley Porter Harper** - January 14, 2020 at 10:43 PM

CA

“ *Carolyn Anderson lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Carolyn Anderson** - January 14, 2020 at 08:27 PM

CP

“ *Carolyn Palmer sent a virtual gift in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Carolyn Palmer** - January 14, 2020 at 07:33 PM



“ *Condolences:To The Cannon Family. Sister Dorothy Branch-Cannon Was A Pillar In Our Community And Surrounding Areas. She Was A Great Example Of A Proverb 31Woman Of God.She Spoke On Several Programs For Me And She Touched So Many People By Sharing God's Word With Us. Gone But Will Never Be Forgotten. Rest In The Arms Of JESUS.AMEN !!!*



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**Evelyn Young** - January 14, 2020 at 05:55 PM

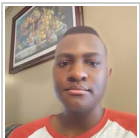


“ *Virgie Hobson lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Virgie Hobson** - January 14, 2020 at 04:51 PM



“ *Jejuan Brown lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Jejuan Brown** - January 14, 2020 at 04:22 PM

BJ

“ *Bobbie Nell Bogan Johnson lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Dorothy Louise Cannon*



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**Bobbie Nell Bogan Johnson** - January 14, 2020 at 03:21 PM