



## Mrs. Julia Fortes Owens

April 23, 1921 - November 5, 2010

Mrs. Julia Fortes Owens

Sunrise: April 23, 1921 - Sunset: november 5, 2010

Gorgeous

omnipresent

Devoted

selfless

enduring

nurturing

Divine

When anyone in Prairie View and beyond lingers upon the descriptive "Angel on earth," a vision of Julia Owens will waltz in their heads on still waters of serenity. Selfless servant to all in need and all she loved. Julia was an unconditionally kind soul whose heart always had room for one more. hers was a spirit all she touched will never forget.

The lady made her entrance on earth April 23, 1921, as Julia Fortes, in new Bedford, Massachusetts. She was raised in nearby harwich on Cape Cod by her loving parents Antonio & Maria Fortes of Brava, Cape Verde. Mr. & Mrs. Fortes impressed upon Julia from childhood to always be of service to others... no matter what was required. They gently yet firmly insisted she embrace The Art of giving with all she had within. From this diminutive acorn of human kindness grew a gigantic ministry of caring. Julia received one of her greatest blessings the day she married her soul

mate, Dr. Emery R. Owens, who graduated from Physicians and Surgeons College in Boston with an M.D. degree and soon after became a junior physician for the Prairie View Health Center. The town, in turn, was graced by this blissful couple's arrival. Though the now Mrs. Julia Owens was only briefly formally employed at Prairie View A&M as a statistician for sociology professor Dr. Henry A. Bullock in 1942, she remained at service on campus the rest of her life – a radiant and resourceful woman whose omnipresence and unrelenting presence swiftly became the sweet stuff of legend.

Ever concerned about the future of young people, especially impressionable young girls, Julia's was a familiar face as a Sunday School Teacher, Girl Scout leader, co-founder of the Prairie View Chapter of Jack and Jill of America, and sponsor of all incumbent "Miss Prairie View" pageant queens. Of the latter, Julia could be depended upon to assist them in selecting their gowns - loaning garments and accessories from her vast personal collection - but more importantly, molding their mindsets to the tunes of honor, beauty and service, ever-imparting graciousness to their presentation. Julia was determined to touch the lives of as many future engineers, attorneys, athletes, doctors and politicians as possible.

To the community at large, Julia's skills, gifts and areas of expertise were at the disposal of all. A self-described "One Woman Welcome Wagon" and a proud "Doctor's Wife," she was seen as much as her husband when folks were in time of need. She selflessly opened her home, offering a confidential ear, a hot meal, a warm hug, a dry shoulder and sage advice. An avid reader, Julia would send folks back to the world with articles ripped from magazines and newspapers that spoke explicitly and with timeliness to their needs, and followed with sincere cards and letters of concern, encouragement, lightness... and always a prayer. She was never too busy to sit with the recently widowed or lonesome shut-ins in need of a friend. Indeed, on the very day that a stroke brought an end to her far-flung expressions of compassion, there were cards and a box in her car to be

mailed.

Julia brought beauty wherever she went with the floral and gardening skills she began honing at the age of six among her mother's hydrangeas, daisies, sunflowers and peonies - a green thumb that earned her many a Blue Ribbon for her exquisite, creative floral arrangements as a member of the Prairie View garden Club. She also harbored a strong passion for the culinary, specializing in hearty comfort foods. Julia loved to cook for friends, prepare soul-stirring soups for the sick or surprise someone special with their favorite dish. She was best known for her bountiful Clam Chowder, Boston Baked Beans, chewy, chock-full brownies, Jagicida and Canja (a Cape Verdean specialty) and last but not least, "Julia's Texas Bread Puddin'."

Among Julia Owens' finest personal achievements was creating the initial opportunity for Catholic students to worship together on the Prairie View campus - first humbly at a makeshift altar in the guest house, followed by sites at the Banks library, the administration building and finally, St. Martin dePorres Church, named after the Black saint, and the first and only Catholic church in predominantly Baptist and Methodist Prairie View.

There Julia shared the fruits of her Religious Studies education with young and old alike. Julia was also a Platinum Alumni member of The Houston Chapter of Links, Inc. and proudly served in The Catholic Daughters of America, the Newman Club and the Eucharistic Ministry.

A humanitarian of local, national and international concerns, Julia Owens was a volunteer for the Red Cross, Chairman of the Gulf Coast Regional Center Blood Drive, was the cheerful reassuring presence at the Waller County hospital gift shop and even assisted in a missionary capacity, shipping much needed equipment and medical supplies to places as far as Argentina, Guatemala and South America. For this work and more, Julia Owens was lauded with countless honors, awards and accolades. She was the 1991 recipient of the Johnson-Phillip All Faiths Chapel leadership

Award, the 2001 recipient of the Lula B. White Award for Community Service, the 2004 humanitarian Award winner from the Top Ladies of Distinction, inc., Prairie View Chapter - and was cited by Texas Southern Newman Association for untiring efforts.

One of the highlights of Julia's life was the opportunity to be the personal "Chauffeur for a Day" to sociologist and civil rights activist W.e.B. Dubois, transporting the distinguished legend to and from the Houston Airport for his speaking engagement on the Prairie View campus in the late '40s.

Mrs. Julia Owens was also a most popular woman of society with memberships in a vast variety of highly distinguished social groups. She was a member of The Women's Auxiliary to the Houston Medical Forum, a proactive organization of doctor's wives, and a co-sponsor of the prestigious LeBelle Lettres Club. Most colorfully, in 1956 Julia became a member of The Coterie Club - a splendid collective of elite Black wives that knew how to throw a party when parties were precious for people of color. Julia was swiftly elected Chairman of the Courtesy and Decorating Committees and all but owned the distinction of "Most Thoughtful" at each subsequent year's elections. Being the wife of a Boulé she was an active Archon.

Still, with all these distinctions and accomplishments, Julia Fortes Owens was first and foremost a family woman of unreserved devotion to her husband, his work and their extended brood of family and friends. As a couple, "Doc & Julia" were likened to The Duke and Duchess of Windsor for their enduring love and admiration for each other. And after his sad passing a decade ago, Julia kept his memory and legacy alive by working tirelessly on behalf of his emery R. Owens Foundation which provided scholarships for outstanding pre-med students of merit.

Julia was so proud of the ladies her daughters Carolyn and Rosalyn became under her love and guidance. She absolutely adored her three grandsons Byron, Mark and Max - her joys - from whom the feeling remains mutual. And far from stereotypical "mother-in-law," Julia loved and was loved by

her sons-in-law. Carolyn's husband, Carl Westbrook who is a prominent physician (OB-gyn) in the Tyler/east Texas area has delivered hundreds of new lives into our world. Byron and Mark who affectionately called their grandmother "gran-gran," always knew a "special" letter or package would arrive from her each week (as well as Max). Rosalyn's husband harvey Mason - a legendary musician of world renown - even composed a song for Julia titled "Ju-Ju," a name he gave her so it would be easier for grandson Max to call out for his grandmother. Meanwhile, the spirit of "Ju-Ju" can be enjoyed by the rest of the world via the appropriately titled CD Heartfelt by the modern jazz quartet Fourplay of which harvey is a founding member. Carl and harvey will continue to see Julia in the eyes of her daughters.

Julia's love stretched just as deeply to her friends. And anyone who was a friend of a friend was embraced equally or more by Julia. indeed, after luther Francis, a patient for whom Doc cured his stomach ulcers after reading up on and intuitively adopting a revolutionary new approach, Julia fed him a special gentle-on-the-tummy diet that laid the foundation for a friendship that endured a half century. And when daughter Rosalyn introduced Mother to her jewelry designer friend, Diane, Julia adopted her as her own, encouraging them both to embrace their Cape Verdean roots. Diane, in turn, showered Julia with a box of 30 big hoop earrings that she fussed and boo-hooed over with giddy joy, marveling over each individually wrapped trinket, wore eVeRy pair Then sent a SeRieS of thank you letters of gratitude. They were the perfect accoutrements for a stylish lady - often likened to lena horne - who loved her sunglasses, scarves and shoes.

Though rarely seen angry, Julia's ire could easily be raised if one made a promise and failed to keep it, or shirked a responsibility she expected them to honor. Doc often told her, "Julia, you can't expect everyone to rise to your standards... 'cuz they are mighty high." Then again, there was nothing "standard" about Julia Fortes Owens. her kindnesses and personality

earned her nicknames and monikers from loved ones such as “Class Act,” “Calendar girl,” “Mrs. Claus,” “Jackie O” and “Mother Julia” (as in “Mother Theresa”).

While her compassionate activities and fierce independence confounded many as they pondered how one wondrous woman accomplished so much for others while never once denying her family, Julia had an answer for them in a favorite axiom she lived by:

if you think i have worked hard in our community in trying to be of help to others, let me remind you by paraphrasing a John Ruskin quote: “The highest reward for a person’s toil is not what they get for it but what they become by it.”

Julia Fortes Owens officially became “St. Julia” on november 5, 2010. And now she is with god, reunited with her beloved emery... and steady 'bout the business of finding her long lost sepia sister in loveliness, lena. To all within eyesight of this dedication and who knew Julia... you were blessed.

# Cemetery Details

## Prairie View Cemetery

Prairie View, TX 77446

# Previous Events

## Visitation

NOV 12. 5:00 PM - 5:50 PM (CT)

Johnson-Phillips All Faith Chapel  
FM 1098 Rd & University Dr  
Prairie View, TX 77446  
<http://www.pvamu.edu/pages/1521.asp>

## Service

NOV 12. 6:00 PM (CT)

Johnson-Phillips All Faith Chapel  
FM 1098 Rd & University Dr  
Prairie View, TX 77446  
<http://www.pvamu.edu/pages/1521.asp>

## Service

NOV 13. 10:00 AM (CT)

Johnson-Phillips All Faith Chapel  
FM 1098 Rd & University Dr  
Prairie View, TX 77446  
<http://www.pvamu.edu/pages/1521.asp>



# Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Julia Fortes Owens*

January 28, 2023 at 11:58 AM



“ *Julia, Thank you for all the ways you have help me and many others better ourselves. Your love and kindness will forever be cherished. Your will have a special place in my heart, and with each beat of every day you will be remembered. You shared your love and your daughter in a humble and graceful manner. Until we meet again. "I Love you ... thank you." Rest Well. Nan Gail and family*

**Max Gail** - November 11, 2010 at 01:55 PM



“ *Julia,  
Only a few days have passed by and our hearts still cry for you..  
We pray to God to make me survive the pain and sadness that I go through..  
Treasure her God in your Garden of rest, for here on earth she was one of our best..  
Still love you alwas and forever.  
Wayne W. A. Rose and Family  
Dennis,Ma. (Cape Cod)*



**Mr. W. A. Rose Dennis, Ma. (cape Cod** - November 09, 2010 at 12:15 PM

MC

“ *Mr. W. A. Rose Dennis, Ma. (cape Cod lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Julia Fortes Owens*



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**Mr. W. A. Rose Dennis, Ma. (cape Cod - November 09, 2010 at 12:00 PM**

MC

“ *Mr. W. A. Rose Dennis, Ma. (cape Cod lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Julia Fortes Owens*



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**Mr. W. A. Rose Dennis, Ma. (cape Cod - November 09, 2010 at 11:59 AM**

LF

“ *Leslie And Family sent a virtual gift in memory of Mrs. Julia Fortes Owens*



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**Leslie and Family - November 09, 2010 at 09:19 AM**