



## Shirley Duke Battle

November 29, 1934 - January 14, 2026

On January 14, 2026, God called his beautiful and loving servant to eternal rest. Shirley Delores Duke Battle was born on November 29, 1934 in Portsmouth, VA, to Earl Duke, Sr. and Willie Mae Davis Duke. During her formative years, Romie and Mattie Duke, her grandparents, raised her in Norfolk, VA, where she learned about Jesus and serve God alongside her grandmother, who was an evangelist. When she returned to Portsmouth, she lived with her mother Willie Mae Ford and her beloved stepfather, Willie Ford.

Shirley attended public schools in Portsmouth, VA, and graduated from I.C. Norcom High School in 1954. She attended Norfolk State University (then, Norfolk Division of Virginia State College) for three years and was crowned Miss Freshman. She also graduated from the Crestwood Nursing School in the Class of 1963, and was elected Sgt-at-Arms. Shirley always had a thirst for learning, which was reflected in the number of Christian and other books that were a part of her personal library.

She married Cato M. Battle on September 8, 1956, the love of her life, and from this union they had four amazing daughters, who were the joy of her life: Zelene, Rosalind, Shirley "Yvette," and Ezell. She always said that her daughters loved her and made her life complete. Cato and Shirley were married for almost 60 years. Her grandchildren Ayanna, Fianna, and Maya were the best "gifts" she could receive, and she enjoyed caring for them, talking to them, and laughing with them. They affectionately called her "Grandme." She gave unconditional love to her family as well as firm talks when necessary.

Shirley enjoyed her 30 years working for Sentara Norfolk General Hospital, where she served as a Nurse's Aide and Ward Secretary. At Norfolk General, she was known for her evangelism because she distributed the Daily Bread books to her co-workers and left them in the chapel for visitors. Many people turned to her for advice, and when she retired, her co-workers gave her three retirement parties. While Shirley worked at Norfolk General, she was also proud of her part-time work as an Avon Lady, where she received numerous awards for her ability to increase monthly sales. Her daughters fondly remember helping her with her orders and going with her on her deliveries.

She was an active member of Third Baptist Church for more than 30 years, and she served in the Jolly Workers Club, the Women's Ministry, and sang in the Gospel Choir. Later in her life, she joined First Baptist Bute Street, where she enjoyed the preaching of her nephew Dr. Robert G. Murray, Pastor, and formed lasting friendships with several members, and finally, she became a member of St. Mark Missionary Baptist Church because she had attended a small Bible Study group in the past led by Pastor Emeritus Dr. Curtis Edmonds. When she was not serving in the church, Shirley readily took food baskets, clothes, and toys to those who were in need, which prompted her husband Cato to call her "God's little social worker."

Shirley enjoyed being the oldest matriarch of the Battle Family and relied on the family reunion calendars to consistently send out birthdays cards to relatives and monetary gifts to the younger children. She would reach out to family members and offer encouraging words if she knew that they were facing challenges. Her favorite outing was Father's Day lunch with her father Earl Duke, Sr. and receiving phone calls from her brother Delbert.

Shirley valued her friendships, especially with fellow Norcomite Helen Majette, with whom she would call regularly. Her daughters' friends also found a special place in her heart. When they visited their home, Shirley would look in the closet for hats, gloves, and scarves, and give them a dose of Father John or offer a bowl of oatmeal. Some of their friends commented she would provide guidance and a listening ear when they needed support.

Her thoughtfulness and compassion led her to support various charities including the Native American Children schools, Disabled Veterans Association, St. Jude Hospital, and the American Heart Association. Everywhere she went, Shirley was able to connect with people. During her appointments at Maryview Hospital, many of the staff told her they were encouraged by her words.

Her deep and abiding relationship with God allowed her to share God's word with friends and strangers alike. She would share her personal testimonies of how God's faithfulness gave her hope during some of the trials in her life. Her unwavering devotion allowed her to bring others to Christ.

Shirley was known for gratitude throughout her life. She was a person who thanked everyone for showing her kindness. During the last weeks of her life, she thanked the EMTs, medical staff at Maryview Hospital, Sentara BelleHarbour Hospital, and Sentara Obici Hospital. Her daughters witnessed how the staff were touched by her supportive

words as they completed their tasks.

Shirley was predeceased by all of her parents; her husband Cato M. Battle; and her brothers Earl Duke, Jr. and Delbert Duke. She leaves to mourn her memory: her daughters Zelene B. Bell (Wallace, Sr.); Rosalind B. Jennings; Shirley "Yvette" Broom; and Ezell L. Battle; three granddaughters Ayanna L. Broom; Fianna Z. Bell; and Dr. Maya Bell Phillips (Kevin); her brother Rev. Marvin Duke, Sr.; and sister Earline Duke; along with a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

# Cemetery Details

## Albert G Horton Jr. Veterans Memorial Cemetery

5310 Milner's Road  
Suffolk, VA

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JAN **21**. 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

JT Fisher Funeral Services  
1248 George Washington Hwy North  
Chesapeake, VA 23323  
info@jtfisherfuneralservices.com

## Service

JAN **22**. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Mark Missionary Baptist Church  
2714 Frederick Boulevard  
Portsmouth, VA

# Tribute Wall



“ J.T. Fisher Funeral Services created a Tribute Video in memory of Shirley Duke Battle



J. T. Fisher Funeral Services - January 20 at 07:58 PM

PR

Thoughts and prayers with you Ezell and family. Love you. Patricia (Pat) Robinson

Patricia Robinson - January 21 at 01:14 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Shirley Duke Battle.



January 27 at 10:00 AM

TF

“ The Reese Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Shirley Duke Battle.

The Reese Family - January 27 at 10:00 AM

RM

“ My heartfelt condolences to you (Zelene, Ezell and Rosalind) and your family.

Rockette Winters McGee

Rockette W. McGee - January 22 at 11:43 AM

DQ

“ Donna Quinerly lit a candle in memory of Shirley Duke Battle



Donna Quinerly - January 22 at 10:19 AM



“ 1 file added to the album LifeTributes



J. T. Fisher Funeral Services - January 21 at 11:33 PM

FP

“ Fran Phillips-Calhoun purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Shirley Duke Battle.



Fran Phillips-Calhoun - January 21 at 11:06 PM

FP

“ Fran Phillips-Calhoun planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Shirley Duke Battle.

Fran Phillips-Calhoun - January 21 at 11:06 PM



“ 3 files added to the album LifeTributes



J. T. Fisher Funeral Services - January 21 at 07:48 PM

TS

“ Tyrone, Sirlonia and Ebone’ Stevens purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Shirley Duke Battle.



Tyrone, Sirlonia and Ebone’ Stevens - January 21 at 04:44 PM

N1

“ Norcom Class of 1976 purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Shirley Duke Battle.



Norcom Class of 1976 - January 21 at 11:08 AM



“ 26 files added to the album Life Tributes



J. T. Fisher Funeral Services - January 20 at 06:52 PM

IT

“ To the Battle family, friends, loved ones, and our family in Christ, Amanda and I want to extend our heartfelt condolences and join you in celebrating Ms. Battle’s life. She was a warrior for our Lord and Savior, and her contributions to our lives will never be forgotten. We celebrate her infectious laugh, her beautiful eyes, and her humongous smile.”



Ibn A. Taylor - January 20 at 02:13 PM



“ Gracious Lavender Basket was purchased for the family of Shirley Duke Battle.



January 20 at 02:04 PM

BS

“ Bessie Tax Service purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Shirley Duke Battle.



Bessie Tax Service - January 19 at 08:45 PM

BS

“ Bessie Tax Service planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Shirley Duke Battle.

Bessie Tax Service - January 19 at 08:45 PM

DB

“ Sending our sincere condolences to the Battle, Bell, and Jennings Families- Jacqueline & Delmarene Barnes



Delmarene Barnes - January 19 at 06:32 PM

WD

“ Roslan,  
So sorry for your loss. She lived a good life and she is receiving a well deserved rest. She has earned her wings. May she rest in heaven.

Duke and Denise

Willie Ducre - January 17 at 07:06 PM

SH

“ Sherae Harding-Griffin lit a candle in memory of Shirley Duke Battle



Sherae Harding-Griffin - January 17 at 05:54 PM

HP

“ Herman and Yolanda Parker purchased the *Your Light Shines* for the family of Shirley Duke Battle.



Herman and Yolanda Parker - January 17 at 01:59 PM

HP

“ Herman and Yolanda Parker planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Shirley Duke Battle.

Herman and Yolanda Parker - January 17 at 01:59 PM

SS

“ Staff of JT Fisher Funeral Services sent a virtual gift in memory of Shirley Duke Battle



Staff of JT Fisher Funeral Services - January 17 at 01:15 PM

SS

“ Staff of JT Fisher Funeral Services sent a virtual gift in memory of Shirley Duke Battle



Staff of JT Fisher Funeral Services - January 17 at 01:15 PM

SS

“ *Staff of JT Fisher Funeral Services lit a candle in memory of Shirley Duke Battle*



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**Staff of JT Fisher Funeral Services** - January 17 at 01:13 PM