90TH BIRTHDAY SPEECH

FOR

PORTIA TURNER

Hello everyone!! Today is a very, **VERY** special day. It has been **NINETY** years in the making but we finally…. **FINALLY** have the privilege of honoring my beautiful, dedicated, loving, and faithful Aunt Essie Mae on the incredible achievement of reaching her **NINETIETH** birthday!!! I know a lady doesn’t usually tell her age, but we had to let it out… after all, this is probably the **ONLY** way we could all get her in one room and make a fuss about her! (**Wait for the laugh**). Today we celebrate this milestone in the place where Aunt Essie Mae has spent her life and has given her heart, her soul, and her considerable devotion. This beautiful woman has, without question, devoted her life to the service of God and to all of the people around her. She is the most giving, loving, and thoughtful person I know. She has spent her entire life gathering her wisdom and giving it back by teaching with love while sharing her gifts of grace and faith with all of her soul. Anyone who has crossed her path knows what it means to meet an actual angel… right here on earth. One of the greatest blessings of my life has been to be a part of her family and the joy that is emanating from all of us, thanks to our connection to my aunt, is inspiring.

Booker T. Washington said, “Those who are happiest are those who do the most for others.” Aunt Essie Mae, It’s not possible that your paths ever crossed but from the sounds of it, I would think that Mr. Washington learned from **YOU**! I’m sure everyone in this room has a story or a recollection of just how much you have touched their lives. You have truly lived every moment of your ninety years dedicated to the service of others and of God. For all of us to have the chance to serve you and acknowledge the priceless contribution you have made and continue to make in all of our lives is really the most humbling gift I can imagine. There is not a person that crosses your path that isn’t charmed by your friendly voice, your helping hand or your devout wisdom. It’s been said that a person should never forget to show hospitality and kindness to strangers because in doing so, one may have entertained an angel without knowing. Aunt Essie Mae didn’t have to be taught this principal. She was born with this knowledge. And that’s what makes such an extraordinary human being.

I have so many wonderful memories of Aunt Essie Mae. Growing up I looked forward to spending summers with my Grandmother and Aunt Essie. Young people today may not realize it, but the times we share with our family-those simple, genuinely happy times, are the jewels that feed our souls and define our legacies. The summers were wonderful but I also have to say Aunt Essie was my favorite Sunday school teacher. There is something about how children can sense and appreciate authenticity, and I may have been very young at the time, but her gentle manner and insightful message always got through to my soul. Even today, some \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years later, I can hear her talk to us about (**Name a** **favorite Bible passage or psalm your aunt loves to cite**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. And when I wasn’t absorbing those heartfelt Sunday school lessons, there was nothing like spending Thanksgiving with Aunt Essie and her entire family. (**Name the members of your Aunt’s immediate family with whom you spent Thanksgiving**) From Uncle \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, we learned what it meant to give thanks… for our family… our faith… our blessings…. and the wisdom to find a purpose in life.

So here we are, in celebration, with love and devotion in service to our Queen! And Aunt Essie Mae is the best kind of queen… rich beyond even **her** years in wisdom and faith, humble to a fault, and always more devoted to serving others than in expressing concern about herself. She is truly a living legend and an angel on this earth and for once we are finally able to acknowledge the indelible and timeless mark with which she has blessed her family, her friends, her church and all who cross her path. When God made Essie Mae \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, He broke the mold. Fortunately He granted her a long, productive, life filled with the riches that one who is truly, genuinely touched by God could appreciate. I cannot imagine what my life would have been like without her loving touch and because of her; I am inspired to live my life in ways that would make her proud. It is an honor to be a part of her living legacy. Happy, Healthy Birthday, Aunt Essie, and May God Bless you!! Thank you!