



Juanita Francella Thomas

AUG 31, 1923 - JAN 12, 2025



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CHAPEL
OF THE
CHIMES
OAKLAND

Funeral, Cemetery
& Cremation Services

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Juanita Francella Thomas

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Juanita Francella Thomas, was a woman whose life was a shining testimony to faith, perseverance, and love. Born on August 31, 1923, in Lafayette, Louisiana, Juanita was the second child of Walter and Mary Lou Foote. She grew up in a close-knit family on Plum Street, surrounded by the adoration of her parents and siblings —Dorothy, Sadie, Walter Jr. and Glyn.

Juanita's love for learning and teaching shaped her path. After graduating from Paul Breaux High School in 1940, she attended Southern University A&M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where she majored in education, and eventually graduated from Grambling State University. While attending Southern, her roommate Zemma Thomas, introduced her to the love of her life, Staff Sergeant Robert Colby Thomas, who was serving overseas in World War II. Their love story unfolded through heartfelt letters and blossomed into marriage on August 14, 1946. Together, they built a beautiful life, raising their family.

With their six-month old Ronita, their journey took them from Louisiana to San Francisco, CA where Juanita continued her career as a dedicated teacher. Faith played a central role in their lives, and their involvement in Missionary Temple CME Church eventually led her husband, to his calling as a licensed minister. After being ordained in 1953, the family was moved to two locations in Louisiana, Minden for three years, where Juanita gave birth to Robert J. and Shreveport, for seven, where Juanita gave birth to Kelesha Lei. In 1963, the family was transferred back to Oakland to a new ministry at Beebe Memorial Cathedral where Juanita's dreams of homeownership came true in the Oakland Hills. In 1965, her husband co-founded and lead the congregation of Church Of All Faiths, where Juanita supported and partnered in growing the church, singing in the choir and being a member of several boards.

Juanita's dedication to education extended beyond teaching. She pursued graduate studies at San Francisco State University, earning a Master's in Arts degree in 1965. She served as a counselor at Castlemont High School and later at Skyline High School, in the Oakland Unified School District, where she inspired countless students until her retirement in 1984.



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Over the years she and Robert enjoyed traveling, bowling, a good movie, and spending holiday celebrations with Robert's siblings and their families. Laughter was a staple in the family, infused with Juanita's incredible cooking. She was known for her mouth watering biscuits, her yummy peach cobbler and her two variations of New Orleans creole gumbo. Often on the fifth weekend of the month, Juanita & Robert would take off for their favorite hideaway in Monterey for time alone. Both Juanita and Robert were active in Greek organizations with Juanita being a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

From an early age, Juanita demonstrated an insatiable curiosity about her family's roots. Her passion for ancestry led her to create a remarkable family tree for the Foote-Steuben lineage. For over two decades, she brought generations together through biannual family reunions, celebrating the rich heritage and deep connections she so lovingly preserved.

Despite life's trials, including the passing of her beloved Robert Colby Thomas in 1981, Juanita remained resilient, a pillar of strength for her family. She later married Harold Cotton and, after their parting, embraced a new chapter in life. She continued to travel, began walking the lake with friends, embraced painting on canvas, and as a member of Delta, helped students achieve their dreams through scholarships.

In her later years, Juanita's journey took her to Rossmoor and Byron Park Retirement Communities, Walnut Creek; and most recently Golden Pond, Sacramento. In 2020, feeling a need to be part of a church community, Juanita joined Grace Presbyterian Church, Walnut Creek. She felt nourished from the encouraging sermons, singing and loving fellowship, that motivated her faith. Wherever she went, her home was a haven of love and warmth, with her famous biscuits and gumbo ready for family and friends. Her unwavering faith in God was the foundation of her life, guiding her every step. She lived by her favorite scripture, "walking by faith and not by sight," and her actions inspired everyone she encountered.

Juanita lived a long, fulfilling life, reaching the remarkable age of 101. Her legacy is one of kindness, encouragement, and boundless love. Her favorite saying, "The Queen—Helping students succeed," reflects her lifelong commitment to uplifting others. Today, as we bid farewell to our beloved Juanita, let us honor her memory by embodying the values she held dear—faith, family, and service to others.



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She leaves to continue this life in the will of the Lord: Her sister Sadie Malveaux, and brother Walter Foote, Jr. and spouse Geneva. Her daughter, Ronita B. Johnson and spouse John; her son Robert J. Thomas and spouse Susan; her daughter Kelesha L. Martin and spouse Wayne. Grandchildren, Genji Johnson and spouse Robert, Janay Parnell and spouse Albert, and Elizabeth Martin; Alecia Smith, Naivasha Thomas, and Kayla Thomas; Great Grandchildren, Anaya, Amir, Faith, Moriah, DJ, Noelle; Nieces Ora Meacham, Karen Joy, Janice Walker, Lily O'Toole, DeLisa Hamilton, Demetra Broussard;. Nephews Herbert Malveaux, Ronald Malveaux, Robly Broussard, Jr. and Kevin Broussard Jr.; God-daughter Lydia Jackson and a host of cousins and friends.

Rest well, dear Juanita. You have run your race, and now you are home.



Events

Juanita Francella Thomas

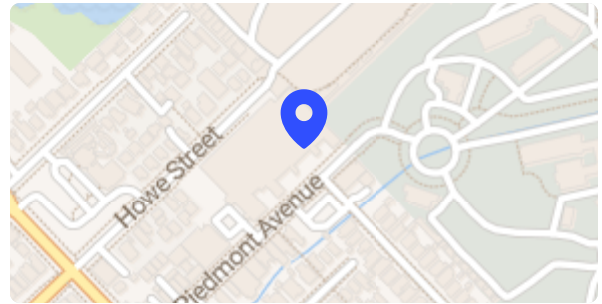
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Quiet Hour

 **Thursday**, January 23, 2025

 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM PT

 **Chapel of the Chimes**
4499 Piedmont Ave, Oakland CA 94611

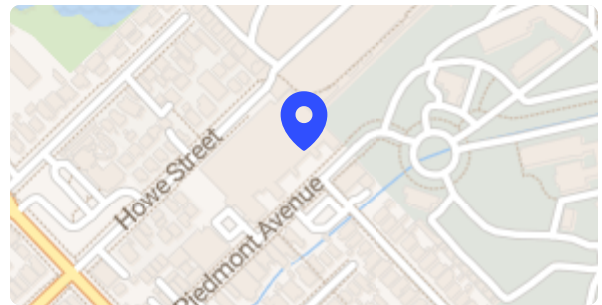


Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Service


 **Thursday**, January 23, 2025

 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM PT


 **Chapel of the Chimes**
4499 Piedmont Ave, Oakland CA 94611

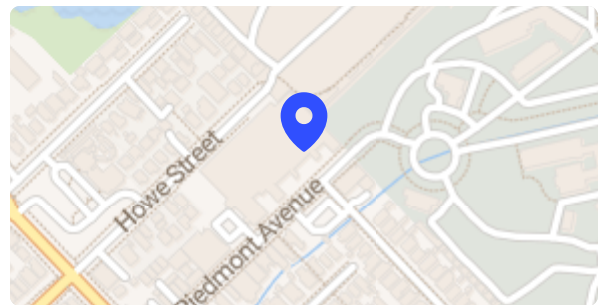


Funeral Chapel Service

 **Friday**, January 24, 2025

 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM PT

 **Chapel of the Chimes**
4499 Piedmont Ave, Oakland CA 94611

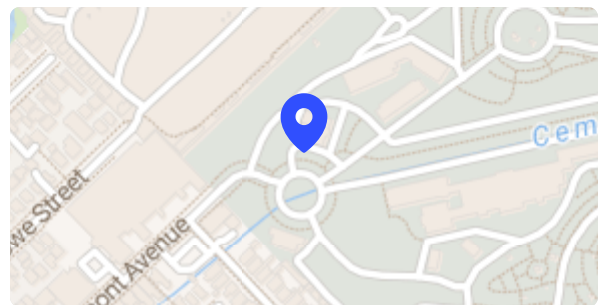


Graveside Service

 **Friday**, January 24, 2025

 1:00 PM - 1:30 PM PT

 **Mountain View Cemetery**
5000 Piedmont Ave, Oakland CA 94611





Events

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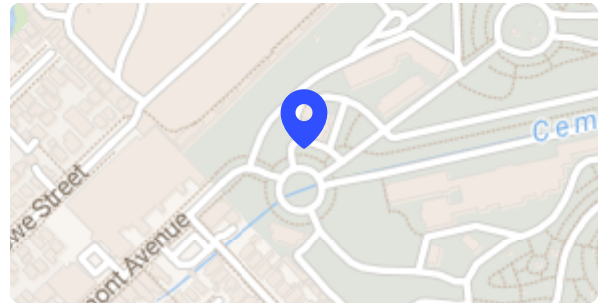
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Cemetery Details



Mountain View Cemetery

5000 Piedmont Ave, Oakland CA 94611





Tribute Wall

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Anonymous sent a Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum to the Thomas family.

January 23 at 2:36 PM



Anonymous planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Juanita.

January 23 at 2:36 PM



Anonymous sent a Serene Reflections Bouquet to the Thomas family.

January 22 at 8:47 PM



Anonymous planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Juanita.

January 22 at 8:47 PM



Sadie Malveaux And Family sent a Magnificent Life Spray to the Thomas family.

January 17 at 5:04 AM



Marvin And Carmen Martin sent a Peaceful White Lilies Basket to the Thomas family.

January 16 at 6:37 AM





Tribute Wall

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Anonymous sent a Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum to the Thomas family.



January 15 at 12:01 PM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Juanita by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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