

Betty Sue Washington

Called Betty Sue · Born March 12, 1947 · Clarksdale, Mississippi

They are still here. This is a living obituary, not a death notice.

Betty Sue Washington, called Betty Sue, is still here. Born March 12, 1947, in Clarksdale, Mississippi. She is writing this herself.

She was raised by Mae Hale, born Mae Brooks, and Ellis Hale, in a loud kitchen on a porch that stayed the family porch. Joann was the sister who shared the room. The story they still tell is the morning she stole a biscuit cooling on the stove and blamed the dog. There was no dog.

She finished Coahoma County schools and taught third grade for thirty-four years. She kept the extra pencils. She knew the quiet children by name. The attendance book is still in a drawer.

She married Robert Washington in 1971 under a borrowed tent after a church supper. He stepped on her foot twice and she married him anyway. They raised Denise, Marcus, and Angela. Angela married a Cole. The grandchildren sit on the couch after church, before supper. Young names stay off this page.

She is Baptist, quietly. Choir when her voice held. Sunday table is the religion of it: sit down, pass to the left, no paper plates, gravy from Robert's mother's boat. The biscuit recipe is in the hymn book in the left drawer, buttermilk in pencil

because she kept changing her mind. Precious Lord, then too much food.

Picture her in the roses. Angela already knows how to prune them. Marcus gets the attendance book. Denise is the one she was proud of when she left, and did not say it then. She is saying it now.

This is not a death notice. She picked the words. She picked the pictures. Sunday table stays Sunday table.