



## Mrs. Evelyn Serena Stafford

April 19, 1921 - June 19, 2024

Mrs. Evelyn Serena Smith Stafford, 103 years of age, a long-time resident of Peoria, Illinois, transitioned from her life on earth to her heavenly home at 3:13 am Wednesday, June 19, 2024, at Belmont Village Senior Living in Memphis, Tennessee. Evelyn was the youngest of two daughters born to Gus and Serena (Lewis) Smith on April 19, 1921, in Muskogee, Oklahoma. She married the love of her life, Dr. James B. Stafford, Jr., in St. Louis, Missouri on December 13, 1943.

Evelyn Stafford graduated from Manual Training High School in Muskogee, Oklahoma, Valedictorian of her class. In 1942 Evelyn received her Bachelor of Science degree in Education, from Illinois State University in Bloomington, Illinois, majoring in home economics. Evelyn received her master's degrees in special education and speech therapy from Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois, where she lived for over 60 years.

Evelyn was a World War II veteran, who had enlisted in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and was stationed at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. Commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant, she was sent on assignment to Fort Huachuca, Arizona, where she met and married then 2nd Lieutenant James B. Stafford, Jr. Evelyn and the lieutenant, Dr. James B. Stafford, O.D., were married 79 years before his death on May 5, 2023.

Evelyn Stafford worked for the state of Illinois for over 36 years and retired in 1986. She was an adjunct professor at Illinois Central College and Bradley University, teaching African-American Studies and the Exceptional Child in the education departments. Evelyn began a second career as a licensed real estate agent, selling real estate for eleven years before retiring a second time. Evelyn served on numerous boards and committees. She was a faithful member of Mt. Zion Baptist Church where she worshiped for over 60 years and served as a Deaconess and a Sunday school teacher among other roles and assignments.

Upon her transition, Evelyn Serena Smith Stafford joined her beloved husband, Jim (Dr. James B. Stafford, Jr.) and leaves her love and spirit to one daughter, Sylvia Victoria (Ernest, Jr.) Thompson of Detroit, MI; one son, James B. (Melanie) Stafford III, of Memphis, TN; four grandchildren; five great grandchildren; one niece, Carol Walker, of Los Angeles, CA; and a host of other family and friends who love and miss her. She was also preceded in death by her parents and one sister, Kathryn Maynard.

Funeral services will be held at 11 am on Saturday, July 6, 2024 at Mt. Zion Baptist Church with a visitation one hour prior at 10 am. Rev. James Flemming will officiate. Evelyn will be laid to rest at Historic Springdale Cemetery with full US Army Military Honors.

Simons Mortuary has been entrusted with arrangements. Online condolences may be made at [simonsmortuary.com](http://simonsmortuary.com).

# Cemetery Details

## Historic Springdale Cemetery

3014 N. Prospect Road  
Peoria, IL 61603

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JUL 6. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church  
305 S. MADISON PARK TERRACE  
Peoria, IL 61605  
(309) 674-4379

## Celebration of Life

JUL 6. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church  
305 S. MADISON PARK TERRACE  
Peoria, IL 61605  
(309) 674-4379

# Tribute Wall



“ *Simons Mortuary created a Tribute Video in memory of Mrs. Evelyn Serena Stafford*



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**Simons Mortuary** - July 15, 2024 at 04:01 PM



“ *Simons Mortuary created a Tribute Video in memory of Mrs. Evelyn Serena Stafford*



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**Simons Mortuary** - July 05, 2024 at 02:36 PM



“ *Shirley Hinton lit a candle in memory of Evelyn Stafford*



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**Shirley Hinton** - July 19, 2024 at 01:17 PM

VC

“ Our sincere condolences on the passing of Evelyn Stafford. Thankful to have spent time in Peoria while visiting Bloomington, Illinois. From the Clark family of NEW UORK CITY.



Victoria and Alonzo Clark(NEW YORK CITY) - July 05, 2024 at 09:40 AM

VC

“ Sylvia and James, our condolences to you and family on the loss of your father last year and now mom. May they once again be reunited.



Victoria and Alonzo Clark(NEW YORK CITY) - July 03, 2024 at 11:55 PM

VC

“ Victoria and Alonzo Clark(NYC) lit a candle in memory of Evelyn Stafford



Victoria and Alonzo Clark(NYC) - July 03, 2024 at 11:44 PM

VC

“ Sylvia and James our condolences to you and family on the loss of your father last year and now mom. May they once again be reunited.

From Alonzo and Victoria Clark of New York.



Victoria and Alonzo Clark(NYC) - July 03, 2024 at 08:52 PM



“ *John H Lee lit a candle in memory of Evelyn Stafford*



John H Lee - July 03, 2024 at 06:33 AM



“ *Lorene J King lit a candle in memory of Evelyn Stafford*



Lorene J King - July 01, 2024 at 04:14 PM



“ *My sister Willie V. Richmond-Hubble was a close friend of Sylvia she always spoke about how nice MRS STAFFORD was she and Sylvia remained friends untill she left and relocated to Calif. So sorry for your loss Syliva and James and Family. R.I.H MRS STAFFARD. May God be with the STAFFORD FAMILY. VERNELL RICHMOND-BRADSHAW*

VERNELL RICHMOND - BRADSHAW - June 30, 2024 at 05:56 PM



*Mrs. Stafford was an honorable and kind soul; soft-spoken, smart - yet humble; and always wore a welcoming smile. Her sweet spirit will remain with me always. She leaves behind a legacy of love and greatness in the eyes of God. My condolences to James, Sylvia, spouses, grandchildren, great-grands and all the rest of the family.*

Lorene J King - July 01, 2024 at 04:20 PM

PJ

“ This beautiful lady here was an inspiration to me especially when she would come and get her hair done. I remember the day she ask me to take her to get a wig. We go to Maxies beauty supply store and purchase a wig. After purchasing the wig Mrs Stafford didn't want to wear it. I told her she was going to wear that wig one day and I think now this is the time sje?will be wearing her wig she purchase years ago. I love you Mrs Stafford and so do God. You live a wonderful wonderful life to live to see beyond 100.  
From your hair Stylist Pam Johnson

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**PAM JOHNSON** - June 27, 2024 at 02:09 PM

SC

“ Sherry Cannon lit a candle in memory of Evelyn Stafford



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**Sherry Cannon** - June 26, 2024 at 11:38 PM

TW

“ Theresa Walker lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Evelyn Serena Stafford



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**Theresa Walker** - June 25, 2024 at 07:10 PM

RA

“ Renee Adell lit a candle in memory of Evelyn Stafford



Renee Adell - June 25, 2024 at 06:21 PM

GG

“ I loved Evelyn. She & I worked together for years in real estate. She was a true woman of God. I learned a lot from her. We had many laughs together. Her & Doc attended my book signing. I called her every time I came back to Peoria. A full life lived @ 103yrs. Rest in Heavenly peace 🕊

Geraldine Godfrey - June 22, 2024 at 05:29 PM

LB

“ Laraine Bryson lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Evelyn Serena Stafford



Laraine Bryson - June 22, 2024 at 01:50 AM

JB

Mrs. Stafford was the epitome of grace and kindness. I was blessed to sit in one of the workshops she led for women. She walked what she taught. I will always remember Mrs. Stafford warmly and cherish each interaction I was privileged to share with her.

Joyce K Banks - June 23, 2024 at 03:14 PM

SC

Mrs. Stafford was a blessing to so many. Rest well, and I'll see you in the morning...

Sherry Cannon - June 26, 2024 at 11:40 PM

BT

“ My heartfelt condolences to the family! Mrs Stafford coordinated my wedding and was a great friend to my family! May she take her rest!!!! Love always, 💕💕💕 Beverly Johnson Thomas

Beverly Thomas - June 21, 2024 at 01:58 PM

LK

Mrs. Stafford was a kind and caring lady. May she rest peacefully in heaven with her husband. 🙏🕊️

Lorene J King - June 27, 2024 at 11:41 AM

L(

“ Lisa Jones (Allen) lit a candle in memory of Evelyn Stafford



Lisa Jones (Allen) - June 20, 2024 at 11:36 AM

PH

“ Phil Hckman lit a candle in memory of Evelyn Stafford



Phil Hckman - June 20, 2024 at 08:13 AM

CW

“ *Catherine Randle Watson lit a candle in  
memory of Evelyn Stafford* ”



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**Catherine Randle Watson** - June 20, 2024 at 03:23 AM