



Carolyn King Chissell

November 10, 1934 - June 27, 2025

Carolyn King Chissell passed away on the evening of Friday, June 27, 2025 at the age of 90. She was born on November 10, 1934 in Baltimore, Maryland, a daughter of the late Helen Anderson King and Charles Johnston King. Carolyn had a warm and vibrant personality with a dazzling smile. She loved life and had a deep interest in people. She was quick to make friends and accumulated many lasting friendships and acquaintances over the course of her long life. She had a curious mind and was always interested in new information, especially about health and wellness.

After graduating from Frederick Douglass High School in Baltimore, Carolyn attended Howard University and graduated with a BS degree in 1956. While at Howard she became a member of Delta Sigma Theta sorority. In 1960, Carolyn married the late John T. Chissell, a Baltimore physician and they had twin daughters, Carla and Crystal.

Carolyn had a lifelong love of fashion and was known for her creative style. She studied fashion design at the Maryland Institute of Art from 1964 – 1967. She created many unique and original designs for herself and her children during that time. Carolyn was among 16 women nationwide who were included in a May 1965 Ebony magazine article entitled “Best Dressed Women” who were “noted for their sound fashion judgement.” The article included a photo of Carolyn modeling a white alaskine gown that she had

designed and made herself.

At the start of her career, Carolyn was a kindergarten teacher in the Baltimore City Public Schools. During those years she started a cosmetics sales business with her friend, Sara Gray. Carolyn used her innate sales and public relations skills to recruit salespersons, produce promotional materials, conduct demonstrations in the early days of multi-level marketing.

Carolyn left teaching in 1972 and went on to serve in executive positions with Baltimore City government, working with anti-poverty and community development programs. She worked with the Model Cities Agency where she was Chief of Personnel, and with the Urban Services Agency where she led personnel matters for 20 community programs and was promoted to lead human resources training. She served on the executive steering committee of the Afram Expo in Baltimore for six years, coordinating city agencies, community groups, arts and cultural organizations for this huge festival that drew crowds of 400,000. In 1978 she earned an MA in Public Administration from George Washington University.

When she left City government in 1981, Carolyn served as CEO of the USO of Central Maryland where she initiated a partnership with the USO of Germany to improve relationships between GIs and foreign culture. Carolyn has had a lifelong interest in travel, and foreign cultures and people. She loved to learn about people from other countries, particular people from African countries, and she hosted many African guests through the International Visitors Association of Maryland, where she served as a board member.

In 1985, Carolyn made a career transition to become a Senior Financial Advisor with the Variable Annuity Life Insurance Company where she served for 19 years as a licensed financial services professional. This role was perfectly suited to Carolyn's personality and interest in people. She advised

hundreds of employees of public schools, universities, hospitals and nonprofit organizations in wealth accumulation and investment management. She said that it never seemed like work because her clients were so interesting to her. She consistently ranked as one of the top 25 nationwide producers for the company.

Carolyn served on the boards of many organizations, including Planned Parenthood, the Urban League, and the Woodbourne School and Center of Maryland, a residential treatment center for youth with behavioral and mental health needs. She was a lifetime member of the NAACP.

In 1990 Carolyn was elected to public office in the Town of Highland Beach and served two 4-year terms as Commissioner, during which she concentrated on Planning and Zoning issues. She had a life-long relationship with Highland Beach, having spent summers at her family home there since childhood. She was an active volunteer and a beloved participant in the social life of the Highland Beach community.

Club life with other Black women was a mainstay of Carolyn's enjoyment of life. With a group of friends, Carolyn started The Bon-Bons in her 20's. That group of friends has stayed together for 65 years, up to the current day and has seen each other through all of life's joys and sorrows, marriages and divorces, children and grandchildren, additions to the group, and losses to death.

Carolyn's other clubs include the Baltimore Chapter of The Girl Friends, Inc. since 1978, and the Baltimore Chapter of the Smart Set, Inc. Carolyn's mother Helen, was one of founders of the Baltimore Philomathians and Carolyn proudly carried on the tradition of this group of Black women who are "lovers of learning." Last year she joined the newly convened Cousins Book Club with old and new friends.

Following her retirement in 2004, Carolyn enjoyed travel, social and creative pursuits. She enjoyed creating beautiful and unique jewelry made with crystals and gemstones that carry healing properties. At the age of 80, she studied acting with the Heralds of Hope Theater Company and made her debut at the age of 81 in a starring role. Her performance was a big hit and she went on to perform in other productions for Heralds of Hope and other community theaters. Perhaps Carolyn's greatest joy in the last decade of her life was her cultivation of friendships with younger people who were as devoted to her as she was to them. Instead of becoming smaller and lonelier as she approached her 90th year, her life became bigger, richer, and more filled with love and companionship.

Carolyn lived by this motto: "The power of how you feel is within you, so live gratefully and joyously."

Carolyn is survived by her daughters Carla Chissell and Crystal Chissell, her sister Juanita Burrell and her niece Lawry Nicole Godfrey. She also leaves many other family members and friends who will sadly miss her.

A Celebration of Life Service will be held on Monday, July 7 at 10:00 am at March Life Tribute Center, 5616 Old Court Road, Randallstown, MD 21244.

Previous Events

Memorial Visitation

JUL 7. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

March Life Tribute Center - Randallstown
5616 Old Court Rd
Windsor Mill, MD 21244
(410) 655-0110

Celebration of Life

JUL 7. 11:00 AM (ET)

March Life Tribute Center - Randallstown
5616 Old Court Rd
Windsor Mill, MD 21244
(410) 655-0110

Tribute Wall



“ *March Life Tribute Centers - Laurel created a Webcast in memory of Carolyn King Chissell*



March Life Tribute Centers - July 03, 2025 at 02:58 PM

HE

“ *Heather E. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Carolyn King Chissell.*

Heather E. - July 06, 2025 at 06:18 PM

KS

“ *Khari and Samantha purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Carolyn King Chissell.*



Khari and Samantha - July 06, 2025 at 03:46 PM

MC

“ We the March Family and Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love, and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

March Life Tribute Center - July 02, 2025 at 03:10 PM