

Service of Thanksgiving for the Life of



Dania Cayasso
November 14, 1928 - January 3, 2024

Elmslie Memorial United Church
Saturday, January 13, 2024
10:30 a.m.

Interment at Dixie Cemetery

Officiating Minister
Rev. L. Christopher Mason

Organist
Antonio Sanchez

Order of Service

Opening Remarks & Prayer	Rev. L. Christopher Mason
Hymn	Great Is Thy Faithfulness
Scripture Reading- Psalm 46.....	Lauren Brook
“The Prayer”	Beverly Markman
Eulogy	Hon. Sir Alden McLaughlin Jr. KCMG MBE KC JP MP
His Eye Is On The Sparrow	Rupert Ackerman
Sermon	Rev. L. Christopher Mason
“Pie Jesu”	Denise Smith
Hymn	How Great Thou Art
Benediction	Rev. L. Christopher Mason

Pallbearers

Andrew Cayasso
Christopher Wight
David Wight

Kindu Ebanks
Randy Greenfield
William Cayasso

Honorary Pallbearers

Wilbur (Bing) Thompson
Carl Gordon
Claston Holness
Chris Samuels
Derrick Holness
Dr. A. Steve Mcfield
Freddy Smith
Henry Ebanks
J.D. Martin
John Rojas, Jr

Johnny Rojas
Hon. D. Kurt Tibbetts
Rene Soto
Richard Flowers
Rupert Ackerman
Tyrone Rojas
Percy (Henny) Webster
Frank Flowers Sr.
Michael Wight
Philip Wight

Gerald (Gerry) Kirkconnell
Kerith McCoy
Albert Thompson
Charles Murray
Billy Rae Martinez
Sean Martinez
Brian Wight
Clarence Flowers
Ned Solomon

Ushers

Donna Bush
Jill McDonald
Laurice Fraser

Guest Book Attendants

Julie Ann Dixon
Summer Thompson

Eulogy

Sadie Dania Cayasso nee Byrd (fondly known as Miss Dania) was born in George Town on November 14, 1928, the eldest of seven children born to Guy and Kady Byrd.

Dania's early education was at the Little School House on the Waterfront, where the children were taught by Teacher Hill. She also attended the Presbyterian church and in later years became a member of Elmslie Memorial United Church.

At the age of 21 Dania married Wilfred Cayasso and to this union four children were born, Alvin Bruce (Larry), Lana, Wilfred (Freddy) and Sidney, who heartbreakingly died in infancy. Dania suffered another profound heartbreak in December 2011, when her beloved grandson Dwayne died tragically. Dania always provided support and love for her family, and her children and grandchildren were her everything. With her friendly and outgoing personality, she found her true calling in tourism. Dania's love for tourism started when she went to work at Galleon Beach, the first hotel on Seven Mile Beach, in 1961. She often spoke about the owners, a British couple, Mr. & Mrs. Benson Greenhall. Dania was an excellent cook and worked in the hotel's kitchen with well-known Caymanian chefs John Jefferson, Sr. and Cleveland from West Bay. She was always very proud and happy to say that in those days all the staff were Caymanians, predominantly West Bayers and George Towners. Her desire was to see more young Caymanians working in the tourism industry.

She worked at Galleon for several years and when the Greenhalls opened the Coral Caymanian, she went to work there.

When Mr. Norberg Thompson opened Winterhaven Guest House in South Sound in 1970, he recruited Dania as the head housekeeper. She would tell the story that one of the guests she met there was none other than the famous American Union leader, Mr. Jimmy Hoffa. She thought he was a very nice man!

In 1972 Mrs. Evelyn Andresen opened the Almond Tree restaurant on North Church Street and she knew that Dania was the perfect choice to work alongside her and help her grow the business.

During her time at the Almond Tree, Dania became the face of that establishment. She worked as the hostess, waitress and part time cook. She would always joke that she did everything, except tend the bar! She always told the story of the day in the early 1990's when an actress from her favourite soap opera, General Hospital walked through the doors of the Almond Tree and what a good time she had chatting with her! When she returned to the States, the actress wrote Dania a nice note to thank her for her hospitality and sent her an 8X10 autographed photo which she proudly hung on a wall in her living room.

The Almond Tree was one of the most popular restaurants in Cayman for almost three decades. Over the years owners changed, but the one constant was Dania, who stayed until the doors closed in 1999 and the beautiful thatch building was demolished. This was a sad day for her as that chapter in her life came to an end, but she was now a grandmother and her grandchildren brought great joy to her life. She was now able to spend more time with family and close friends.

Dania made friends with people from all over the world during her many years working in the tourism industry. Many of these friends kept in touch with her, and one particular family from Tennessee invited her to spend a vacation with them. One of the highlights of her trip was when they took her to "Dollywood Park".

She was a true tourism ambassador for the Cayman Islands and was recognised for her contribution when she received the Tourism Long Service Award at the National Heroes Day ceremony in 2017. This was a very happy and proud day for her!

Dania was also a loving caregiver for the Bodden children, Sherrie and Patrick in their early years.

All who knew her will remember Dania as being a good and kind person, but she was also very outspoken and would tell you her truth whether you wanted to hear it or not! She always gave great advice and was always encouraging people to improve their lives.

She was loved by many and was well-known on the Island, and her family and friends are all the better for having her in their lives.

Dania had life-long friends and her best friend forever is Maria DeCicco. Holding a special place in her heart are “adopted daughter and son”, Karin Thompson and Rene Soto. Special friends Alita Soto, Polly Thompon, Lilymae Bodden, Janice Martinez, Claudette Eden, Natalie Adolphus and Carl Gordon. The Wight family with whom she always enjoyed Sunday lunch and Christmas dinner.

Dania passed away peacefully on Wednesday, January 3, 2024 at her home on Smith Road, surrounded by love at the grand age of 95. Preceding Dania in death were her precious baby boy Sidney, beloved grandson Dwayne, loving parents Kady and Guy, brothers Bossie and Donnie, sisters Dolly, Brenda and Maria. Left to mourn are her dear children, Larry, Lana and Freddy, adored grandchildren, William, Amber, Andrew, Alyssa and Anna, daughters in law Sandra and Sue, sisters Lulu and Judy and their husbands Johnny and Henry, former daughter in law, Charmaine, and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and friends in Cayman and the United States.

She will be greatly missed by all who knew her and will live on in our hearts forever.



Tribute from Lana Cayasso – Daughter

Ma,
My heart, my hero, my defender, my advisor, my stylist, the most phenomenal mom ever.
Not having any sisters, you are also that but most importantly you were the person who I knew was always in my corner.

There are no words that I could write that could define what you were to me. I'm so happy when people look at me and say, you look just like your mom. Thanks, Ma, for making sure I never wanted for anything.
You worked so hard for your children. All you did really was work.
You were simply the best mom. Go take your place where you belong.
You lived a full life. We were always so proud of you because everybody knew Miss Dania. When people saw me, they didn't say, how are you doing? They always said, how Miss Dania?

My mother was right about everything.

I will always remember to pat my hair down, not let it stick up, not wear the dresses you didn't like or the shoes you didn't like, wear my lipstick, button my blouse, and walk tall.

Love you forever, forever, love you forever and always.

Lana

Tribute from Larry – Son

I can safely say that I was blessed with the best mother in the whole world.

Thinking back to the early years of my childhood I cannot help but be reminded of the profound impact that Ma had on our lives. The values she stood for. The deep inner strength she embodied always making sure that we knew how much she loved us. Her advice was always straight from the heart. Never one to sugarcoat the hardships of life, she instead did her best to equip us to face whatever challenges that life as we knew it back then would bring. She would always make sure that we showed good manners and respect to our elders working tirelessly, juggling jobs and enduring long hours, all to ensure that our family never knew the hardships that were so commonplace back then.

As most families back in the 50's and 60's, our family grew up with very little money and we oftentimes had to make do with whatever little we had. Hard work was no stranger but Ma with the help of her loving parents and siblings always made sure we were well fed, properly clothed, wearing our best to Sunday School every Sunday Morning. Growing up, Ma was our pillar of strength.

When I reached the age that I could go out and find odd jobs, I did, to make life a little easier for Ma and for us. Before long, I was old enough to take my first call to sea. During this time I would always make sure to save my meager earnings, faithfully sending my monthly allotments home to help with the family living expenses. After each trip, I would return home to be greeted with the latest in home improvements that had been carried out while I was away. It always seemed that Ma had a special knack on how to stretch every penny that she managed to make and put aside, always striving to improve our lot in life.

Because of this, Ma and I developed a very special relationship and she would call on me to help with anything she needed, even to go and find Lana when she had stayed out too late with her friends. Ma was a worrier especially about those who were dear to her. I would always tell her that worry was not going to get her anywhere, but she would not listen. Ma was always known to say exactly what she thought whether you wanted to hear it or not but it was always because she cared about you and wanted what was best for you. Everyone knew exactly where they stood with Ma and that included me. She loved her children and grandchildren and would do anything to make sure that we were happy but did not hesitate to tell us if she did not like something that we said or did. For this I will be forever grateful as it made us stronger and better people.

In her latter years I always enjoyed our visits or telephone calls, where we would sit for ages and talk about the Good Old Days in Cayman and the characters that were around back then. We would laugh and laugh. I will always cherish these memories.

And now Ma, after all these years, the time has finally come for me to say goodbye. Even though you are no longer with me, I can still feel your love guiding me. You are always in my heart. I love and miss you dearly.

Larry

Tribute from Sandra Cayasso – Daughter-in-law

Dania was a very special person who cared very much for all of us, always worrying about how we were doing. She would ask for each by name, wanting to know the latest that was happening with everyone and always worried more about how her family and close friends were doing before she worried about herself. There were many times that we would take food to Dania and she would share it out and keep just a little for herself. She made sure everyone had, even her stray cats and chickens. Dania would always ask about my illness and how I was feeling. She seemed to be more concerned about how I was coping than how she was dealing with her own issues.

Dania had strong Christian beliefs and she always told me she was so happy that our children had God in their lives and thanked me for that. She thanked me on many occasions for looking after Larry and our children. Dania often called on me to help her to do certain things or to advise her on how to get them done. I always enjoyed being able to help in some way. I enjoyed the stories she told and we had many good laughs together. Dania loved to sing and would take the opportunity to do so at many of our gatherings, which we all enjoyed. She loved flowers, the more the better, so I made sure that we sent her flowers every year for Mother's Day and Easter. She always made sure to let us know how much she was enjoying them.

I am thankful for all the love she showed me and for so readily accepting me into her family as Larry's wife.
FOREVER IN MY HEART – THOSE WE LOVE DON'T GO AWAY, THEY WALK BESIDE US EVERYDAY, UNSEEN, UNHEARD, BUT ALWAYS NEAR, STILL LOVED, STILL MISSED AND VERY DEAR.

I will miss you and May your soul Rest in Peace

Sue Cayasso (daughter in law)

I first met Ms Dania on Christmas Eve 1998. I was given a very warm welcome and a piece of Cusava cake!! From then on we enjoyed a close friendship and I was always given thoughtful and careful advice. I will miss our precious time together and her advice in life more than I can say.

Tribute from Sisters

Losing a sibling is one of the most traumatic experiences one can go through. Dear sister you are now reunited in Glóry with our beloved sisters and brothers. You lived a good and long life and now may you rest safely in the arms of our Saviour.

Even though you are no longer present in our lives you will always be a part of our memories.

Lulu and Judy

Tribute from William-Grandson
Grandma,

What an extraordinary woman you were. I am eternally grateful for the relationship we had. I think of silly stories and listening to you laugh, your beautiful singing voice and the wisdom you would share. I am thankful that no matter what I do or say, you'll be watching down from heaven, always looking my way. Your spirit will always hold a special place in my heart. Thank you lord for lending us your greatest angel and allowing me to call her my grandmother. I love you so much.

Tribute from Amber-Granddaughter

Grandma, Not enough words can express the love and care I received from this incredible lady. Even though we were in different parts of the world, I always felt I belonged and was made to feel proud to be a Cayasso. Every birthday she would call and sing to me. I will always remember her beautiful voice and how sweet she was. At the end of every phone call I ever had with Grandma she would end the conversation with "take care of yourself", "don't talk to strangers" and "don't forget to say your prayers alright!"

Knowing you're reunited with Dwayne and the rest of your family members in heaven is a beautiful blessing. You're one of the strongest women I ever met, and I am incredibly proud to be your granddaughter. God bless you Grandma.

Tribute from Alyssa, Andrew and Anna – Grandchildren

Grandma was a part of our lives from birth and was there for us every step of the way, showing us her love and support but also letting us know in a stern but loving way if she did not approve of something, like us wearing cut up jeans or braiding our hair for carnival. She would say “Who are you?” I don’t know you” and we would know right away that she did not approve and she would let us know that she did not like it. We respected her opinion and would make sure that we did not go back to her house wearing the jeans or braided hair again. Grandma did not miss the opportunity to give us good advice and teach us life lessons – she would always remind us to be careful of wolves in sheep’s clothing. She also looked for opportunities to spoil us, like giving us lunch money, for the next day, if we went by to visit during the week and when we were going on trips she would always make sure to give us whatever she had to buy ourselves something nice.

Grandma was always proud of our achievements and came to support us at every event, even if it was long – Baptisms, First Communion, Confirmation, Drama Performances, Graduations, Birthday Parties and Christmas Lunches. This year was the first year that Grandma did not come to Christmas Lunch and it made us very sad. Grandma always wanted to know that we were going to Church and Sunday school and wanted updates on how we were doing at school every time we spoke or visited her. She was a woman of strong faith and knowing this has brought us great comfort and has held us together through this very difficult time.

We loved hearing her stories of old Cayman and what a beautiful life they had. Although it seemed tough she never made it seem like that, she always talked about it with so much joy and a smile on her face. She would tell us about all her friends who she had deep love for and considered them family.

There are a lot of things that we will always miss but the ones that we will miss the most are – the calls to come and fix her TV or Clock or put the water bottle up for her, getting a Birthday card with money that was in the amount of our age (we always use to say to her “we can’t wait to turn 100 and get \$100 from you – she would laugh), taking her Sunday lunch and hearing her call us by the nicknames she had for us – Alyssa: Grandma Edith (she said that I looked like Granddad’s mother) or Lyssa, Andrew: Andrew Brian and Anna: Nana.

There are no words to truly express the woman our grandmother was and we are going to miss her very much but one of the things that brings us great comfort is knowing she was reunited with Dwayne and how happy they both must have been to see each other again. We know how good our God is and we know death is not the end so until we meet again Grandma we will miss you but never forget you.

May your soul rest in peace.

Love and Miss You Always Lyssa, Andrew Brian and Nana

“God looked around His garden and He found an empty place. He looked down upon the earth and saw your tired face. He put His arms around you and lifted you to rest. God’s garden must be beautiful, He always takes the best. He knew that you were suffering, He knew you were in pain, He knew that you would never get well on earth again. He saw the road was getting rough and the hills were hard to climb so he closed your weary eyelids and whispered “Peace be thine.” It broke our hearts to lose you but you didn’t go alone, for part of us went with you the day God called you home.”

Tribute from Karin Thompson-second daughter

Dear Larry, Lana and Freddy,

There are no words needed to express the deep feelings of sadness we share today as we come together as a family to mourn the loss and celebrate the life of the phenomenal woman who has played such a pivotal role in our lives and the many lives that she touched along the way. To you, she was simply Ma. or Mama. To me, she was so very much more than the woman who would proudly claim me as her second daughter, watching me grow from a small child to the woman that she would so proudly call her very own little Angel. We can take such comfort in knowing just how much her children and grandchildren meant to her. She loved each of us unconditionally and when I became a mother myself that same unconditional love was instantly passed on to her precious Justin and Britt Britt who loved their Aunt Dania just as much as she loved them. She never got tired of relating the story of the first day she found Justin in the top of her ackee tree refusing to come down.

Not knowing what else to do, she got a chair and sat patiently under the tree so that she could catch him if he fell. As luck would have it, the Russell Brothers from up the road stopped by to borrow a few breadfruits and she enlisted their help in persuading him to come down. By the time I returned to collect him all was forgiven and forgotten. Suffice it to say Justin was never allowed as a little boy to climb the trees in Aunt Dania's backyard ever again.

So today, for the first time since that fateful day in December 1960 when our families became one, we find ourselves coming together to pay our last respects to our very own National Gem. Our hearts are overfilled with sorrow and yet brimming with a lifetime of beautiful memories. Memories of a woman who was not only like a second mother to me. She was my confidante. She was my chaperone. She was my biggest cheerleader. She was my oldest and dearest friend. When I faltered she was there to pick me up. When there was cause for celebration she was always there clapping the loudest. She was our rock. Most importantly she was the glue that held us together.

To my beautiful Dania, you were and will always be my shining star. Your light will never dim in my heart. I love you, and I miss you. Until we meet again.

Your Precious K ❤️

A Tribute to my beloved friend from René Soto

When I was 12 years old I met what turned into one of the greatest friendships in my life. We talked at least twice a week and always was keen to know what was happening in my life and I was in hers as well.

Some of the best advice was always part of our conversation and many times she corrected things which I hadn't thought through thoroughly.

I'd like to thank Lana, Freddie and Larry for allowing me to be a part of the family.

I'm eternally grateful for 53 years of unwavering love, support and friendship, she was truly a second Mum; I will miss her dearly.

Tribute from niece Donna Mae

Aunt Dania, when I heard the news of your passing, I cried, and then a flood of memories of you came to me. I remember the many times I would come and sit with you on your porch, and we would talk and talk—one of the things we both loved to do. I can hear your laughter and your jokes, as you had such a good sense of humor and a talent for telling stories about our history and our family. We often talked about my dad, whom the family tragically lost before my birth. You would always cry, saying poor ole Donnie, and, of course, I would always find myself getting emotional too. You often reminded me of how much I looked like him, as well as you and Aunt Lulu. Aunt Dania you supported me in my career, and you didn't take too kindly to anyone who didn't offer me that same support. You gave me good advice and always told me how proud you were of me, which I appreciated. You were popular and loved by so many; you have been the matriarch of the Byrd family for a very long time, and now that you're gone, you will be missed by those who love you.

Sleep in peace and say hello to our family, especially my dad.

Tribute from Maria – friend

After more than seventy years of friendship, the thought of you not being there in Cayman is painful. Oh, I will return, but the anticipation of seeing you my friend when I arrive will no longer be the same.

Where will I go? What will I do? I am left with just the memories of you; your voice, your laughter, your smile. You always introduced me to strangers as your "oldest and dearest friend" and that will never change.

I knew this day would come for us to part; for me to say goodbye. But Dania, you will forever be in my heart; as you have always been my oldest and dearest friend.

My friend – Rest in Peace

Tribute from Natalie Adolphus – Cousin

Dania, Dan-Dan, my family and my friend. I miss you.

You held such a special place in my heart and was one of my best friends since childhood. We shared so many memories and milestones over the years. We talked about everything...our lives, family, the good old days, our hopes and dreams. It became more challenging in recent times but our daughters were able to help. Jill by visiting you at home and Lana by letting us know what was happening.

You were blessed with 95 years and although the last few years came with its challenges, God promises us in the Bible... That He has prepared a place for us in heaven that where He is, we will be also.

My family and I, thank God for the many years of your life, and join with the song-writer who wrote the words, “when we all get to Heaven what a day of rejoicing that will be; when we all see Jesus we will sing and shout the victory” Rev.

21:4 (KJV) tells us that “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

So until then may the precious soul of our beloved Dania, rest in peace.

Natalie Adolphus and family

Tribute from The Wight Family

We all knew Dania from the time we were children and especially remember her time at The Almond Tree Restaurant. Dania was the original Tourism Ambassador for Cayman and many locals and Tourists would regularly visit The Almond Tree because Dania was there. She made everyone feel welcome and it was a pleasure to visit when she was there.

When Larry married Sandra, she became a part of our family and we became a part of her family. We would see her mainly at family gatherings where she would be dressed in her usual impeccable style. Everyone took these opportunities to sit with her and have a chat. She would always be very interested in how each of us was doing and we were always amazed at how she remembered each of our names and of our children.

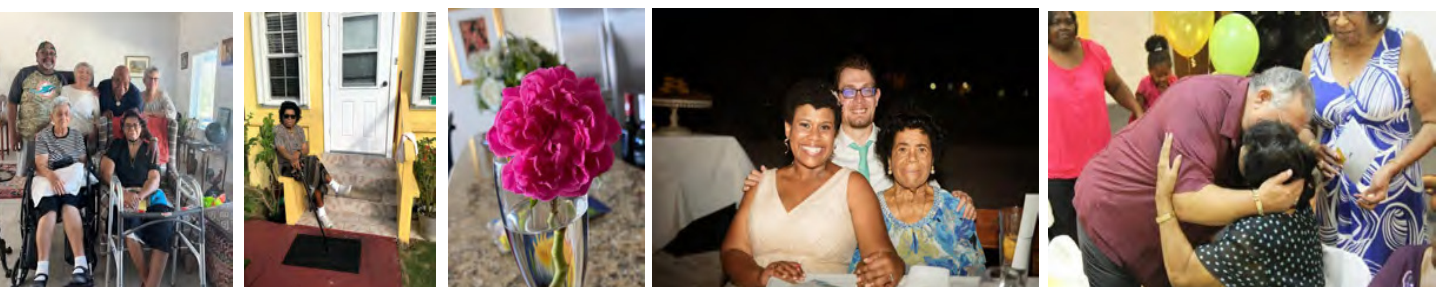
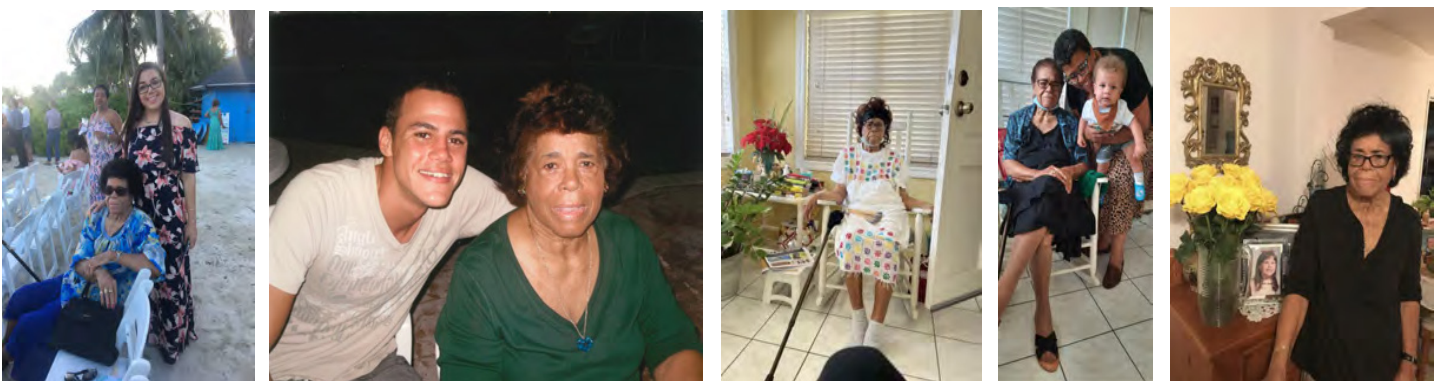
Everyone would chat with Dania, but it was interesting to see how the children took their opportunity to talk with her as well. Many of the cousins saw Larry and Sandra’s children calling Dania Grandma and asked her if they could call her Grandma too. Of course she said they could and the children then knew her as grandma. She knew Brian and Ronna’s twin grandchildren as her ‘Rice and Beans babies’ because when they were first speaking with her they told her they came to lunch to get the rice and beans.

David and Christopher had many enjoyable trips with Dania on the bus rides to special occasions. She was the star of the show and always had her designated seat on the bus. Everyone knew that was Dania’s seat and it was left vacant until they collected her.

Dania was a hardworking Mom who raised three beautiful children. None of us can ever remember Dania complaining about anything but instead was always asking if there was anything she could do for us. She was always very pleasant and had a great sense of humour. She would be very quick to give a joke or tell a story usually with a smile on her face. She had some great stories of Old Cayman and the Characters that existed. We always enjoyed when she and Larry would start telling these stories and would sit and listen for hours.

We will greatly miss Dania and the time she spent with us. I think we thought she would always be there with us. We know she is in a better place because of how she lived her life.

May she Rest in Peace





Graveside Service

Prayer	Rev. L. Christopher Mason
Hymn	God Will Take Care Of You
Committal	Rev. L. Christopher Mason
Hymns	Congregation

*What a friend we have in Jesus
The Old Rugged Cross
When we all get to Heaven*

Closing Prayer & Benediction	Rev. L. Christopher Mason
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God Will Take Care Of You

Be not dismayed whate'er betide,
God will take care of you;
Beneath his wings of love abide,
God will take care of you.

Refrain:
God will take care of you,
Through ev'ry day,
O'er all the way;
He will take care of you,
God will take care of you.

Through days of toil when heart does fail,
God will take care of you;
When dangers fierce your path assail,
God will take care of you.

All you may need he will provide,
God will take care of you;
Nothing you ask will be denied,
God will take care of you.

No matter what may be the test,
God will take care of you;
Lean, weary one, upon his breast,
God will take care of you

The Old Rugged Cross

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross, the emblem of suffering and shame;
And I love that old cross where the dearest and best, for a world of lost sinners was slain.

Refrain: So I'll cherish the old rugged cross, till my trophies at last I lay down
I will cling to the old rugged cross, and exchange it some day for a crown.

O, the old rugged cross, so despised by the world, has a wondrous attraction for me;
For the dear Lamb of God left His glory above, to bear it to dark Calvary.

In the old rugged cross, stained with blood so divine, a wondrous beauty I see;
For 'twas on that old cross Jesus suffered and died, to pardon and sanctify me.

To the old rugged cross I will ever be true, its shame and reproach gladly bear;
Then He'll call me some day to my home far away, when His glory forever I'll share.

What A Friend We Have In Jesus

What a friend we have in Jesus, All our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!
Oh, what peace we often forfeit, Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged; Take it to the Lord in prayer!
Can we find a friend so faithful, Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness; Take it to the Lord in prayer!

Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?
Precious Savior, still our refuge, take it to the Lord in prayer!
Do thy friends despise, forsake thee? Take it to the Lord in prayer!
In his arms he'll take and shield thee, Thou wilt find a solace there.

When We All Get To Heaven

Sing the wondrous love of Jesus,
Sing His mercy and His grace
In the mansions bright and blessed,
He'll prepare for us a place.

Refrain: When we all get to Heaven,
What a day of rejoicing that will be
When we all see Jesus,
We'll sing and shout the victory!

While we walk the pilgrim pathway,
clouds will over-spread the sky
But when traveling days are over,
not a shadow, not a sigh.

Let us then be true and faithful,
trusting, serving every day
Just one glimpse of Him in glory,
will the toils of life repay.

Onward to the prize before us!
Soon His beauty we'll behold;
Soon the pearly gates will open;
We shall tread the streets of gold.

Acknowledgement

The family of the late Dania Cayasso wish to express their sincere gratitude to the many relatives and friends whose support has meant so much during this difficult time.

Special thanks to the doctors and nurses of the HSA (George Town Hospital), Jasmine nurses who have been amazing! Nurses of Caring Hands and Caregivers, Georgette Taylor and Marylou Imperial for making her final days comfortable.

Bodden Funeral Home for their excellent service.