

Louise Freeman Owen

By Artie Maglionico
Borough Historian

Hello dear readers near and far and welcome. I recently had the pleasure of chatting with long time Lodi resident Louise Freeman Owen. Her siblings Calvin and Erlene are members of my L H S graduating class of 1965. Louise was born on June 30, 1952. Her parents Mary Lizzie Elam and George Leonard Freeman hailed from Lincolnton Georgia. In 1945, a few years after their marriage, the couple moved north to the friendly shores of Lodi, NJ. "They moved to Sidney Street." says Louise "They arrived with three boys; Robert, Leonard and Racie." Born here in Lodi were Erlene, Calvin, Michael, Rose, Louise, Barbara, and Nonie." Five boys and five girls." says Louise "It made for a wonderful childhood."

After putting down roots on Sidney Street, George found employment as a sanitation worker at the Vito Stamato Company in Lodi. "My Dad passed away at age 43." recalls Louise "I was twelve years old. My mother had to keep us together as a family unit. She was always singing a song called The Lord Will Make a Way Somehow." Mary's prayers never wavered. She wanted The Lord to let her live to see all of her children grow up. " My mom was a very strong woman." says Louise "Thanks to her, we all made it."

At a ceremony where Louise's son Moses received the Boys and Girls Club Keystone member of the year award, Police chief Andrew Voto told Moses that his grandmother Mary was one of the finest women in Lodi. Mary passed away on November 14, 2006. "My son Moses went on to become Lodi's first African American fire fighter." says Louise "Today he is 2nd assistant chief." Louise's daughter Kiesha, a 1998 graduate of Lodi High School, held the school record in the shot put competition. She did the same at the University of Jersey City where she received an Associate's Degree in Business Administration.

Louise and husband Moses Sr., who married in 1975, have traced their family roots to Cameroon, Africa. "We are extremely proud of our heritage." says Louise "African Americans have made important contributions in all walks of life -

science, music, literature, theatre as well as the military. Black history month show cases these contributions.”

Among Louise’s treasured childhood memories are those spent picking blackberries in a field where now sits Kennedy Park. “We used to bring them home to my mom.” recalls Louise “She always treated us to homemade blackberry dumplings.” Other treats on her Mom’s menu were sweet potato pie, fried chicken, biscuits and collard greens. “My mom had a knack for making a lot out of a little.” says Louise “We always had enough to eat and were never hungry.”

As a student at Lodi High School, class of 71, Louise was a member of the Girls Basketball and Softball teams as well as a member of the Lodi High School Marching Band Color Guard.” I wound up quitting the Color Guard.”, remembers Louise. “I had my own needs to fill since the passing of my father. It left my mother to carry the load. She was truly an inspiration not only to her children but to all who knew her.”

As for being an active member of the Lodi community, Louise is quick to mention that she was always surrounded by good neighbors. “We have a diverse ethnic culture here in the town of Lodi.” says Louise ““As citizens of Lodi and of the world at large, we have to consider all of the different ideas and beliefs other than our own and try our best to live in harmony.”

As our chat was ending Louise turned to me with her gentile smile and added that the town of Lodi is a great place to raise a family. “More African American families are moving into the Borough of Lodi.” says Louise “They know that ours is a friendly and safe community, a safe place for their children to grow and to prosper.”

Louise Freeman Owen and her Husband Moses Sr. have three grandchildren - Joseph, Mason and Janice.

Well folks hope you enjoyed my chat with Louise. She’s a marvelous woman with strong family ties and who has her community’s best interests at heart.

