

# Marie Dickson: The Eastern Star of Community Board 11



Eulalia "Marie" Dickson  
(1923 - 2007)

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,  
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,  
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum  
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead  
Scribbling on the sky the message [She] is Dead.  
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public  
doves,  
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

[She] was my North, my South, my East and West,  
My working week and my Sunday rest,  
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;  
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now; put out every one,  
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun,  
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the woods;  
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

—Adapted from W.H. Auden's Funeral Blues

East Harlem mourned the loss of veteran community advocate Eulalia "Marie" Dickson, who died January 5 at the age of 83.

Hundreds of local residents, friends, and colleagues of Ms Dickson attended a viewing held January 11 at the Johnstone Funeral Chapel in East Harlem.

The service was presided over by Father Mario Guarino and the Reverend III. Bro. Howard Breedy 33° and included scripture readings from the Old and New Testaments and reflections by a number of local officials and members of various civic, nonprofit, and fraternal organizations.

"We were all truly blessed to have had such a great person of her stature in our Order," offered Sister Sheila Grant, Order of the Eastern Stars Grand Deputy of New York and the Country of Canada, a fraternal organization with which Ms. Dickson had been affiliated for over 50 years.

Sister Grant, who handled all the arrangements for Marie's service and published the memorial program "Celebration of Life" – which aptly described her as "a woman of pride, grace and dignity" – then invited others to share their thoughts.

Community Board 11 was eloquently represented as Vice Chair Deborah Quinones, Treasurer Cesar Ortiz, Secretary Frances Mastrotta, and Parks Committee Chair Robert McCullough spoke passionately about Ms. Dickson's remarkable might and her steadfast support and commitment.

Dozens of other community board members came to pay their respects, as did the entire board staff. Also in attendance were many East Harlem notables, including Councilwoman Melissa Mark-Viverito, State Senators José M. Serrano and Bill Perkins, Northern Manhattan Borough Commander Raymond Diaz, Captain Edward Caban of the 25th Precinct, Deputy Inspector David Colon of the 23rd Precinct, 23rd Precinct Council President Cesar Vasquez, members of the Franklin Plaza Board of Directors, Aimee Boden, Jonathan Greengrass, and Sabina Ellentuck of the Randalls Island Sports Foundation, Barbara Brenner of Mt. Sinai, Kathy Benson of the Museum of the City of New York, Carmen Vasquez of Hope Community, Taller Boricua director Fernando Salicrup, Robert and David Acosta of El Barrio Hardware, and East-Harlem.com editor Jose B. Rivera.

After many poignant eulogies, visitors were then invited to repair to the community room in Ms. Dickson's Franklin Plaza building on First Avenue for an evening repass.

A mass was held the following morning at St. Ann's Catholic Church in East Harlem. The January 12 service was presided over by Father Mario Guarino and other members of the church, and included beautifully sung arias such as Gounod's "Ave Maria."

Afterward, Community Board 11 Chair Robert Rodriguez delivered a statement on behalf of Congressman Charles B. Rangel, which read in part, "In all of my years, serving as a Member of Congress for the 15th Congressional District, Marie Dickson has served right along with me. It will not feel the same knowing that [she] will not be around to watch my back here in East Harlem as she has done for me all the years. Eulalia 'Marie' Dickson was God's gift to East Harlem and, her legacy will be spirited through all the work that will be done on behalf of her undying commitment to the people."



*Marie Dickson presiding over the election of Community Board 11 officers in 2006*

Ms. Dickson was then buried in Forest Green Memorial Park in Morganville, New Jersey.

## Biography

Affectionately known as Marie, Ms. Dickson was born July 20, 1923 in Atlantic City, New Jersey to Brilliant Victory and Matilda Belinda Vasquez.

An only child, Marie later relocated with her family to the Catskills section of New York. She later graduated from Kingston High School and Columbia University.

Ms. Dickson then married the late Arnold Andrue Carson, Sr., with whom she bore her only son, Arnold Carson.

Marie worked in the accounting department of the Elgin Operating Corporation for over 32 years, and later ran several small businesses in East Harlem. After her retirement, she continued to work diligently with many church and civic groups.

Ms. Dickson was a charter member of the Order of the Eastern Star, and the first Worthy Matron of the group's Empire State Chapter No. 44. She also served as president of the Matrons & Patrons Council, Honored Associate Royal Matron of Amaranth Truth Court No. 2; Queen Mother of King Solomon Palace No. 2; Grand OES & Amaranth Deputy for the State of New York and the Country of Canada; OES School Director and Instructor; and President of the Eleven Builders and Pelican Club. As the group's Travel Coordinator, Marie became a world traveler with junkets to Egypt and other countries.



*Marie Dickson with Councilwoman  
Melissa Mark Viverito in 2005*

Marie was also a long-time member of St. Ann's Catholic Church where she served on four committees. She served as President of the board of directors of Franklin Plaza Apartments and was the founder of the Annual Franklin Plaza Family Day Celebration. Ms. Dickson was also an active member of the 23rd Precinct Community Council and Merchants Association.

Formerly, she'd served as an elected Democratic County Committee Person, treasurer and member of the James Weldon Johnson Community Center; an auxiliary police officer with the 23rd Precinct, volunteer for the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, assistant art director of Green Gallery, Inc., and member of the East Harlem Interfaith Board of Directors.

As a member of Community Board 11 for over 27 years, Ms. Dickson served on nine committees, was chair of the Youth Committee for over 10 years, and most recently served as Chair of the Public Safety and Transportation Committee.

"Marie was extremely intelligent and well-liked," recalls fellow board member Daniel Perez, who first met Marie in 1978 while he was with the Community Assistance Unit. "Her work with the Youth Committee will stand as a measure for generations to come."

During her tenure, Ms. Dickson led the initiative for the renovation of Jefferson Park and advocated tirelessly for drug rehabilitation and youth prevention programs. She also founded "Youth Speak-Out," an annual conference that provided a forum in which local youth could articulate their concerns and be matched with related neighborhood programs. In 1989, Marie dedicated a portion of the annual "Youth Speak-Out" to the "Central Park Jogger" case to allow local teens to address the issue.

Under her leadership, the Youth Committee also published a newsletter and an annual directory of youth services in East Harlem, and surveyed hundreds of youth each year, the results of which were used to target committee priorities for the coming year.

"Marie Dickson ran a very tight ship and had high expectations for all her committee members," said Deborah Quinones, Vice Chair of Community Board 11. "Her standard for commitment was exceptional, always giving 100% to every committee on which she served. Marie also had a very long memory; she was our encyclopedia and could detail the history of any one issue."

In an effort to ensure that youth-funded programs were actually servicing East Harlem youth, Ms. Dickson would instruct Youth Committee members to review funding proposals and conduct site visits to each applicant agency, recalled Ms. Quinones. Two programs that Marie set her particular sights on were the Asphalt Green Sports Center, and the Randalls Island Sports Foundation.

*Marie Dickson  
with former CB 11  
Chair David  
Givens  
and staff member  
Norma Ojeda  
(Photo courtesy  
of CB 11)*

Under Marie's leadership, the Youth Committee convinced Asphalt Green to arrange bus pickups of local youth to the Upper East Side location. And as a result of her work with the Randalls Island Sports Foundation, the agency established the "Marie Dickson Award of Excellence" in 2005 for members of the Jesse Owens Track and Field Club.



"East Harlem lost its most devoted resident [and] the Randall's Island Sports Foundation has lost a true friend in Ms. Dickson, whose passion and persistence for keeping our city's under-resourced youth active and in good health was

unparalleled,” said RISF Executive Director, Aimee Boden. “East Harlem never knew a greater community advocate. RISF will miss her encouragement, both on and off the field.”

When asked what might be the best form of public recognition for her many years of community service, Ms. Quinones said, “The best way to acknowledge Marie’s contributions would be to follow her example and commitment to engaging in the civic process. Marie was concerned about the wasting away of character, integrity and respect for the work that we do. We need to maintain that same standard of excellence.”

*Marie Dickson is survived by her son Arnold Carson, granddaughter Janee’ Nicole Jones, three great grandchildren Rayshord, Briana and Kandace of Virginia Beach; a cousin, Bobby Fields of Washington, D.C., and hundred of friends and colleagues.*