

# Artense James Kelly: A Life of Grace and Resilience

Artense James Kelly, born on May 14, 1924, in Wrightsville, Arkansas, is a remarkable member of the James family, celebrating her 99th birthday on May 14, 2023. She stands as one of the oldest living James family members, carrying with her a legacy of strength and grace.

In her early life, Artense, affectionately known as Tina or "Tiny," shared a close bond with her twin sister, Hortense. They were raised by their parents, Otis and Alice James, in a loving household. Otis, the son of Elliott James, one of the esteemed founding fathers of the "B" Group, worked as a miner and farmer, providing for his family. Alice, deeply devoted to her faith, taught Sunday school and possessed a remarkable gift for eloquent speaking.

Following her parents' divorce, Artense and her sister primarily resided with their mother but maintained regular visits with their father. At the age of 16, Artense moved to Kansas City, where she completed her high school education while staying with relatives. However, it was in Chicago where she would spend the majority of her adult life, leaving an indelible mark on the city and her family.

Artense's time in Chicago was characterized by dedication and achievement. She attended secretarial school and pursued her passion for the

arts at the prestigious Art Institute of Chicago. For an impressive 30 years, she served as an administrative assistant to the Commissioner of the Chicago Health Department before retiring. Throughout her career, she exemplified professionalism and a meticulous attention to detail.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Artense was known for her impeccable style and skilled craftsmanship as a seamstress. She had an innate sense of fashion and created stunning garments, often sewing her own clothes. Her niece, Dawn Payne, fondly recalls how Artense effortlessly tailored her wedding dress without measurements, fitting it perfectly for the bride. Her keen eye for fashion and approval of outfits brought joy to those around her.



Picture 1



Picture 2

Dawn, reminisces about the vibrant experiences she had during her visits to Chicago. Together, they explored art museums, embarked on Lake Michigan dinner cruises, and even learned the art of applying makeup. Through it all, Artense emphasized the importance of education, instilling a lifelong love of learning in her niece.

She also did the same for her husband Edward McFarlin's two nieces and nephew. After the passing of her sister-in-law, Artense, stepped up to care for her children. Even in their adult lives, Artense, continued to hold them dear to her heart, affectionately referring to them as her own children. Her selflessness and deep love left an unforgettable mark on their lives.

Throughout her time in Chicago, Artense cherished her relationship with her cousin Sidney Cherry, who played a significant role in her life. Their bond further



Picture 3

Although Artense never had children of her own, she embraced her role as a nurturing figure in the lives of her sister's four children. From their births to their summer visits in Chicago and support during their education, she poured her love and guidance into their lives. Her dedication and presence left a lasting impact on their upbringing.

enriched her experiences and added depth to her connection with the city.

After retiring and experiencing the loss of her last husband, Artense returned to Arkansas in the 1980s, settling back in Sweet Home. There, she started a small business as a seamstress and continued to devote herself to the church, teaching Sunday school.

Currently residing in a nursing home in Little Rock, Artense James Kelly continues to inspire and embody the positive character traits of the James family. As she nears the incredible milestone of 100 years old, let us keep her in our thoughts and prayers, celebrating her life of grace, resilience, and unwavering spirit.

Stan Harris and Dawn Payne



*Picture 4*

Picture 1: Otis James, twin daughters Hortense and Artense

Picture 2: Front, L-R: Hortense James Tammell, Alice Slater (mother of Hortense and Artense), Artense James McFarlin. Back, L-R: siblings Dawn Trammell Payne, Kenneth Trammell, Rose Trammell. JFR 1975 Robertson, MO

Picture 3: L-R: Lucy James Hackett, Artense James McFarlin, Alphonso James, Myra Harris. JFR 1975 Robertson, MO

Picture 4: L-R: Myra Harris Preyer, Artense James Kelly, Stan Harris. 2019 Little Rock, AR.