



Bernie L Wilkins

March 21, 1943 - December 31, 2021

Bernie L. Wilkins was born on March 21, 1943, in Cape Charles, Virginia to the late George and Serita Wilkins, departed this life on Friday, December 31, 2021.

Bernie graduated from Wilmington High School in 1961. After high school, he enlisted in the United States Air Force, serving his country as an Airman from 1961 to 1965. In 1966, Bernie attended Delaware State College, (now University), where he was a key player on the men's basketball team. In 1970, he had the honor of being listed in the "Who's Who" among students in American Colleges and Universities. He also pledged with Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. his pride and joy. Bernie graduated from Delaware State in with a 3.1 GPA, earning a BS in Business Administration. After graduating, Bernie became an educator in the Wilmington Public School System for three years. After his teaching career, he was employed by DP&L as an Account Specialist for two years; Proudfoot Company as an Account Executive, traveling the United States for four years; Kingswood Community Center as a Youth Coordinator for six years; Neighborhood House as a Youth Coordinator for 25 years; and Children and Families First, servicing the Department of Corrections' Plummer Center and the Hazel Plant Women's Facility until his retirement.

In 1994, Bernie founded the Delaware Juneteenth Association after a trip to a

conference where Juneteenth was celebrated yearly. After returning to Wilmington, he decided that it was time for all Delawareans and people across the globe to know the history of Juneteenth and the celebrations began. With the hard work and dedication of establishing motivational community involvement, the team and Bernie worked tirelessly to establish the Delaware Juneteenth Association.

In 1999, Bernie joined New Calvary Baptist Church, and was later baptized on April 25th. He then became a Deacon under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Vincent P. Oliver. He served diligently until his illness. Bernie served on the Scholarship Ministry and as a member of the Music Ministry, singing on two choirs.

In 2000, along with Bernie to name a few, were former Governor Tom Carper (who signed legislation as a day of observance), former State Senator Margaret Rose Henry, Sandy Clark, Brenda Gunter, Sylvia Lewis-Harris, Nancy Taylor, Bea Carroll Dixon, Kwame Ray Jackson, the late Regena Manley and countless other individuals made his dream a reality. They were the reason we celebrate Juneteenth in Delaware. On June 17, 2021, President Joseph R. Biden signed legislation establishing Juneteenth as a national holiday and on October 27th, our own Governor John Carney, signed legislation making Juneteenth an official holiday in the state of Delaware.

A scholarship was created at his Alma Mater, Delaware State University. Each year deserving students in Business Administration receive assistance from the Delaware Juneteenth Association, in his honor. Most recently, Bernie was nominated for a Community Service Award from Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Zeta Omega Chapter.

Bernie leaves to cherish his memory his devoted wife of 48 years, Karen (Ivory) Ellis-Wilkins; Daughters: Shannon McCartney of Lake Charles,

Louisiana and Kim Collins of Delaware; God Daughters Niani Ellis-Powell and Ki'Yah Ellis-Jackson; one brother-in-law, Tommy (Donna) Ellis; three sisters-in-law, Jean Hill Williams, Cheryl V. Ellis, and Cassandra (Necie) Price; devoted grandchildren, great and great-great grandchildren; and a host of cousins, nieces and nephews.

Cemetery Details

Delaware Veterans Cemetery

2465 Chesapeake City Rd
Bear, DE 19701

Tribute Wall



“ *Gore Funeral Home created a Webcast in memory of Bernie L Wilkins*



Gore Funeral Home - January 22, 2022 at 11:34 PM

CW

“ *CYNTHIA WILLIAMS lit a candle in memory of Bernie L Wilkins*



CYNTHIA WILLIAMS - March 13, 2024 at 11:42 AM

GM

“ *Condolences to the family and may my line brother rest in Omega Chapter*

George Miller

George Miller - January 25, 2022 at 11:58 AM

MB

“ To Danita "NeNe" and Stephanie "Butter" and your respective families,

You have my deepest and most heartfelt condolences. Be strong and know that your grandfather lives on in your hearts... find peace and comfort in those memories.

Love,
Martha "Sister" Bridles

Martha Bridles - January 25, 2022 at 12:14 AM

YB

“ I was fortunate enough to work closely with Mr. Bernie for over 20 years in youth prevention programs. Thank you for being a prevention champion and leader for youth, children, and families. My heartfelt condolences to the family. May he rest in peace!



Yvonne Bunch

Yvonne Bunch - January 24, 2022 at 08:03 PM

VO

“ It was an honor to know Deacon Bernie personally, work with him professionally and to witness his transformation as a true man of God at New Calvary B C. We shall miss this humble soldier of Christ. Sleep on dear friend. Until we meet again...
Pastor and Mrs Oliver

V. P. Oliver - January 22, 2022 at 07:33 AM

VO

“ V. P. Oliver lit a candle in memory of Bernie L Wilkins



V. P. Oliver - January 22, 2022 at 07:20 AM

CW

Bernie will be truly missed sleep in peace sleep in peace dear friend

CeceliA winn - January 25, 2022 at 08:33 PM

JJ

“ Jane Hoy Aka Jann lit a candle in memory of Bernie L Wilkins



Jane Hoy aka Jann - January 19, 2022 at 10:40 AM

SA

“ Sandy sent a virtual gift in memory of Bernie L Wilkins



Sandy - January 17, 2022 at 11:31 PM

SA

“ *Sandy sent a virtual gift in memory of Bernie L Wilkins*



Sandy - January 17, 2022 at 11:30 PM

CS

“ *Cynthia E Slater sent a virtual gift in memory of Bernie L Wilkins*



Cynthia E Slater - January 15, 2022 at 09:28 PM

CS

Condolences to the friends and family of Mr. Bernie. A true example of community service and mentoring for as long as I can remember. Mr Bernie always had a smile but a stern tone as he lead and guided generations in Riverside-Kingwood and in South Bridge-Neighborhood House. Rest in Power Mr. Bernie a true Legend.

Cynthia E Slater - January 15, 2022 at 09:38 PM

AL

“ I've known Bernie for more years than I want to count. Though he was only a few years older, back in the day; that was a big deal. That made him one of the big guys. He could play about any sport. What stood out about Bernie is he would talk to us younger guys about school and education. As time and the years passed, whenever we ran into each other; we found the time to catch up a bit and talk about life, the world and what was happening in it. My deepest condolences to Bernie's family and loved ones. May His Rest Be Forever Peaceful.

Alan Lawrence - January 14, 2022 at 04:55 PM

AG

“ Thank God For Allowing U To Enter My Life Through Ur Son Zachary Grayson. U were a Great Blessing as U Daily Call and Check On Zack And I Even When U Were Going Through. But Gid Has Called To Rest. I Thank You. UR Daughter Anna Grayson. You Shall Be Missed But Not Forgotten. In Jesus Name Amen 🙏

Anna Grayson - January 14, 2022 at 09:08 AM



“ Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Bernie L Wilkins.



January 12, 2022 at 04:34 PM

CW

“ *Cyntha Williams lit a candle in memory of Bernie L Wilkins*



Cyntha Williams - January 12, 2022 at 02:41 PM

SH

“ *Sandi Hagans-Morris lit a candle in memory of Bernie L Wilkins*



Sandi Hagans-Morris - January 11, 2022 at 07:41 PM

TM

“ *Sorry to hear of Mr. Bernie's passing. Condolences to the family. Sincerely The Mayfield's*



Taryn Mayfield - January 11, 2022 at 06:59 PM

AN

Condolences to the Wilkins Family. Bernie and I were schoolmates at DSU. A very good brother. RIP Bernie. Sadly, Arnold Nearn, Class of 71

Arnold Nearn - January 13, 2022 at 12:03 AM