

Gary District High School



The WV McDowell County Board of Education allowed for voluntary integration based upon the individual district. By 1957, the number of blacks Hi students attending integrated schools in the county was four times greater than the entire state of West Virginia in 1959. At the beginning of the fall term in 1958, black students were given the option of remaining at Gary District High School or transfer to the all-white Gary High

School. Many of the students chose to remain at Gary District High School. In 1961, the West Virginia Human Rights Commission was formed after the West Virginia League of Women Voters, the NAACP, the Federal Civil Rights Advisory Committee, and the AFL-CIO lobbied the state legislature successfully. The Commission discovered that in 1963, there were eighty-eight all-black schools still operating in the state. A meeting held in June 1964 by the State Board of Education found that only five counties still maintained all-black schools, including McDowell.

Gary High School



Shortly after a consultant had published a scathing remark against McDowell's controversial and discriminatory policies against black students, the county adopted a plan to merge its segregated school systems. Black students at Gary District

High School would attend Gary High School. The building would be repurposed as an integrated elementary school. The segregated school systems were merged by the spring of 1966. By the fall, all black students in the county attended integrated schools. The repurposed Gary District High School remained open for elementary students until it merged with a school in Welch in 1975.

A Word from The President

Greetings, Garyites!

I hope that all is going well. I pray that you and your loved ones have survived the inclement weather that has plagued many of us. Also, I am praying for those who are sick and those who are bereaved. Please keep the family of the Mayor of Gary in your prayers. Our hearts are heavy in the loss of Mayor Hairston who worked extremely hard for the betterment of the citizens of Gary. Also, please pray for Caleb Carson's daughter as she recovers from illness. Caleb goes beyond the call of duty in keeping the GDHAA family informed about illnesses and the passing of our members. Lastly, just pray for everyone as we navigate through these perilous times.

The GDHAA had a good virtual annual meeting and a great virtual awards program this past July. We awarded scholarships to three outstanding young men who were featured in the last newsletter. Also, it was a treat to have Ms. Juanita Wilkerson join us from her home in Arlington, VA. She turned 94 years old in May of this year, and she was so delighted to have us sing Happy Birthday to her! 😊



We are making plans to hold an in-person reunion on July 7-10, 2022, in Charleston, WV. We are praying that this covid virus will be eradicated so that we can keep our plans. Although the Detroit Chapter and the National Chapter will be assisting, the bulk of the planning and work for the 2022 GDHAA reunion is being conducted by the impressive West Virginia Chapter! A big thank you goes to Vivian Anderson and all who are collaborating with her to ensure that we have a wonderful time when we get together.

We are pleased to welcome a new member to the Board of Directors. Ronald Bell was elected to the Board at our meeting in July. We are excited to have him on board, as he is full of great ideas for our upcoming reunions. He will be working with Bill Madison, others who live in the "DMV," and the GDHAA chapters to help plan our reunion in 2023, which will be held in Arlington, VA.

I had the honor of representing the Gary District High Alumni Association at the Kimball High School Alumni Association Virtual Reunion, which was held during this past Labor Day Weekend. There is a continuing effort to have some type of collaboration between the four Black high schools that were in McDowell County -- Gary, Kimball, Elkhorn, and Excelsior. The feeling is that everyone's numbers are dwindling as we get older, so it is felt that it would be nice if we could collaborate and join in some activities.

At their Saturday evening program, I was asked to give remarks, and I shared a little of what has been happening with our Alumni Association. They, too, are planning to have an in-person reunion in Charleston, WV in 2022. Since the Kimball High School Alumni Association President, Mr. Joe Fitts, was so gracious to invite me to their reunion, I also invited him to our reunion next year.

This is the last newsletter before the holidays! I pray that everyone will have a nice Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year! If you are interested in having another Zoom Christmas party this year like we did last year, please let me know! 😊

Lastly, I must thank Bill Madison for the wonderful job that he does in compiling and editing the GDHAA newsletter! Because I am in contact with Bill often, I know the amount of work he puts into this task. It is truly a "labor of love!" Please do not hesitate to let Bill know how much you enjoy reading the newsletter. Also, please continue to send news to him for the newsletter! 😊

Take care, and God bless you!

Peace, love, and blessings –

Sandra

Obituary - Mr. Larry Hairston, Mayor of Gary, WV



Larry Darnell Hairston, Sr., 71, of Gary, WV, departed this life Saturday, September 25, 2021. The sixth of 10 children, he was born May 25, 1950, to the late Eddie Clay Hairston and Beatrice Clark Hairston in Filbert, West Virginia. Larry loved God with a deep faith and became an ordained minister in his late twenties. Reverend Hairston was pastor of Beulah Missionary Baptist Church in Big Sandy, WV, and also ministered at Lovely Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Kimball.

He was educated in the McDowell County school system, worked in the coal mines for two years, then operated his own businesses, including a grocery store, hauling coal, and secured a contract with the city of Gary for its garbage disposal. He also worked as transportation manager for the Commission on Aging until he retired. In 2019 he was elected Mayor of Gary, WV and began work

on several projects for the improvement his treasured hometown. Known for the immeasurable love of his family, his generosity and compassion, Reverend Hairston believed in sharing his blessings with everyone and really never met a stranger. He enjoyed cooking and baking, gardening, and restoring old cars. Every day was a special occasion for Larry, and he just enjoyed the company of family and friends any time.

Along with his parents, Larry was preceded in death his son Larry D. Hairston, Jr., his first wife Shelia Faye Hairston, three brothers Eddie, Archie and Darrell Hairston, and sister Ardelia Hazzard.

Reverend Hairston leaves many who mourn his absence and celebrate his life. His beloved wife Patricia Williams Hairston, daughters Sabrina (Maurice) Thomas of Winston Salem, NC and Trina Hairston of Mebane, NC, son Tyrone (Margie) Hairston of Mebane, NC, brother Michael (Ruth) Hairston of Havaco, WV, sisters Angeline Hairston and Linda Paramore of High Point, NC and Melva Showalter of Rock Hill, SC, seven grandchildren, 19 great-grandchildren and a multitude of cousins, nieces, nephews and friends, and special nieces.

The funeral is Saturday, Oct 2, 2021. Visitation is at 10am and funeral service is at 11am at Welch National Guard Armory at 600 Stewart, Street. Welch, West Virginia. Rev. James Greene, Officiating. Entombment will be at Restlawn Memorial Gardens 6605 New Hope Road, Bluewell, WV.

GARY HIGH CLASS OF 1971 CELEBRATES 50TH REUNION



Names of those pictured above:

1st row: Pat Adams, Diana Pack, Debbie Lawless, Linda Whitt, Debbie Pugh, Debbie Lawless, Linda Witt, Debbie Pugh, Debbie Miano, Paulett Jones, Darlene Wyatt, and Pamela Jewell

2nd row: Ellen Presey, Frank Hall, Frank Kroll, Stiger, Eddie Reeves, Burton Perry, Steve Swayne, John Machincia, Charles Brown, John Childress, Peggy Anderson, and Barbara Jack

The Gary Class of 1971 held their 50th class reunion on August 6, 2021 in Pipestem State Park (WV). The affair was attended by 21 classmates and 27 guest. This was out of the 120 original classmates with approximately 25 classmates being deceased.

The process to have the reunion started back in June of 2020. The planning of a reunion usually falls on the shoulders of the Class President, Peggy Anderson Monahan who started the ball rolling. A Web Page was established on Facebook to access the interest in the union and to acquire and track down classmates. Those on the committee to make the reunion happen were Peg, Diana Park Lockhart, Pat Adams Price, Debbie Mianon Colo and alan Riggins (with help from his wife Becky Riggins, class of 1973). We planned the reunion the same weekend in an effort to attract people that might want to come in for both occasions.

The reunion was held on Friday night with a meet and greet at 4:30 to 6:00 PM, with dinner and dance to follow. There was a DJ that played songs from the 70s that were favorites of the guest and classmates.

There was a prize for the one who drove the farthest and married the longest which happened to be the same person, Darlene Wyatt Andis and her husband, Ken and is (Dickie). There were also prizes for those who changed the most, male and female, Pamela Jewell and John Machincia were the recipients.

There was a video prepared to view and honor the member of the class that had passed that tated their high school accomplishments. Even though the reunion was held for only one evening, we all had lots of fun. Gift bags were prepare for all attendees and a special gift bag for the classmates was given by Pat Adams Price.

The class also had a 10th reunion, years ago, prior to the 50th, and all said they hoped that they could have another one sooner the next time.



**I ♥
70s**



Ginny Robertson

Ginny Presley Robertson, Gary High School Class of 1969, does a free online magazine for women. Check out On Purpose Woman Magazine for inspiration and resources for your mind, your body, your spirit & your business. <https://opwgc.com/magazine/>. She is also celebrating the 21st Anniversary of the On Purpose Woman Global Community, which connects women around the world to their gifts, their purpose, and each other.

Take the new On Purpose Woman Global Community Quiz: “Are You Ready for the Spotlight?”

www.OPWGC.com/spotlight

Check out Ginny’s New Website: www.OPWGC.com

On Purpose Woman Community

On Purpose Woman Magazine

On Purpose Woman Conferences, Retreats, Workshops & Keynotes

Join us online (until further notice) for Connections Over Coffee happening nine times a month, Connections Thru Conversation which is always online two times a month.

Read the current issue of On Purpose Woman Online Magazine and check out advertising rates and article submission guidelines.

All the above can be found on www.OPWGC.com

Telephone: 443-934-3523





Dr. Clarence (JEEP) Jones was a life-long resident of Roxbury, MA. He was the beloved and devoted husband of Wanda Hale Jones of the Gary District High School class of 1959. He was a regular attendee of the annual all-school GDHS reunions and came to know to many like a true Garyite, i.e., Walter “Defat” Benjamin, the late James Odalis Price, Rudolph Wilson, Wanda & “Pops” Hairston, and a substantial number of the 59ers graduating class. Jeep was educated in Boston Public Schools and attended Winston-Salem State University, formerly known as Winston-Salem Teachers College, graduating in 1955. Although small in stature, Jeep was a starting member of the basketball team that was the first team to bring the prestigious Central Collegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) trophy to the school. He was inducted into the Clarence “Big House” Gaines Hall of Fame for his exploits as a basketball player. Additionally, Jeep ran track and

was one of the managers of the RAMS football team. He pledged and became a member of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

Jeep served his country honorably in the Korean war as a medic after graduating from WSSU. He was employed by the City of Boston in many capacities for over 50 years. He taught in Boston Public Schools, was the first Black Juvenile Probation Officer, served as Director of the Mayor’s Youth Opportunities Program, Director of Youth Activities Commission (YAC), as well as Director of the Mayor’s Office of Human Rights. Jeep was the first and only Black Deputy Mayor for the City of Boston.

Dr. Jones also served on the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) now known as Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) for over 30 years and was Chairperson for 24 years.

He worked on the boards of the John A. Shelburne Community Center and the Boys and Girls Club of Roxbury.

Jeep received a considerable number of titles, such as an honorary Doctorate from Northeastern University, a park named in his honor in Roxbury, rooms named to honor him in the first minority owned hotel in Boston and a meeting and function room at the John A. Shelburne Center.

The latest accolade posthumously to Jeep is the naming of the square near his home to pay homage to his memory and his life-long service to the City of Boston and his community.

Jeep along with his longtime friend the late Rev. Dr. Michael E. Haynes formed various groups such as the Exquisites and the Associates to help mentor and guide young men on “the good path.” They not only learned the game of basketball, but good sportsmanship and sharing. These groups helped young men learn how to dress properly, refine their public speaking skills, regard, and respect females, young and old, and be of service to their community. They were taught the importance of academic success as well how to hone job hunting skills. They learned how to apply to colleges and were taken on Black college tours in the private car and station wagon at the leader’s expense. Jeep and Rev. Haynes exposed them to fine dining etiquette and how to operate in all social circles.

He was a founding member of the Boston Neighborhood Basketball League (BNBL). The BNBL was a summer showcase for basketball players to exhibit their skills to scouts from professional basketball teams. A substantial number of these players were drafted by professional basketball teams.

Dr. Jones was a faithful member of the Historic Twelfth Baptist Church in Roxbury for over 50 years. He served as an usher, a trustee, a deacon, and an inspiring Sunday School teacher. As a member of TBC, he was a hand bell choir ringer, singer with various choirs and a member of the Peace Walkers. This group walked in low-income neighborhoods of the community and offered help of any kind that was needed to families. He dearly loved his family, his Alma Mater and traveling the world with his beloved Wanda.



To see more about Dr. Clarence Jones, go to this link: <https://youtu.be/BZIwbPapcIc>

Jeep and Wanda resided in Roxbury, parented seven children, and became grandparents to fifteen grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Jeep not only made the lives of his family and city better but made this world a better place.

FREDERICK RAY RASH



Frederick Ray Rash, 74, of Abbs Valley, VA, passed away August 6, 2021, in Charleston, WV.

Born in Leckie, WV, he was the son of the late Robert and Pauline Martin Rash. Fred was a 1965 graduate of Gary High School.

He was a Vietnam Veteran serving in the US Army from 1965 to 1968. While in service he received various medals. These include, Good Conduct Medal, Rifle Marksman, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal w/60 clasp, and Vietnam Service Medal. After leaving the military he worked as a coalminer and later was employed as an officer for Bramwell, WV.



Those left to cherish his memory are his loving wife Glenna Rash of the home; children, Robert Rash, Jr (Wanona) of Anawalt, WV, Robert Dillon, Jr (Karrie) of Shelbyville, Indiana, Scott Rash (Jennifer) of Rock Hill, SC and Melissa Dillon Smith (Gilbert) of Mooresville, Indiana; sister Joyce Davis of Sevierville, Tennessee; grandchildren, Nick Rash of Princeton, WV, Kacey McClarnon of Indianapolis, Indiana, Zach Cashdollar of Indianapolis, Indiana, Kaitlyn Cashdollar of Colorado Springs, CO, Kayla Rash of South Carolina, Katie Rash of Georgia, Cody Rash of Georgia, Benjamin Rash of South Carolina, Jessica Sines of Swords Creek, VA, Tabitha Roark, Samantha Paul and Josh Paul all of Anawalt, WV. Great grandchildren, Oliver, Kylie, Adrian, Raiden, Ailah Carlie, Trevor, Sadie and many beloved friends, classmates, and extended family.

Dr. Tiffany Hairston, Recipient of Ohio's Excellence in Teaching Award



The recipient of the 2020 – 2021 Excellence in Teaching Award is a faculty member who is highly sought after by students. She is the proud daughter of a GDHS graduate, Mr. Ronald Hairston.

Dr. Hairston brainstorms ways to make required parts of her courses applicable and challenging to students. She accomplishes this by breaking her students into small discussion groups to review the discussion board posting and engage in conversation, thereby furthering learning and understanding. She is highly invested in her students and holds them to lofty standards but provides the tools needed for students to succeed. Students look forward to her class each week and indicate that she sets the standard for a professor at UT.

Tiffany has worked with UT for the last three years, starting as adjunct faculty before moving to full-time faculty in 2019. She has extensive knowledge in counseling and holds multiple licenses in Ohio. One special note in her experience is she was one of the persons in the inaugural group to be accepted into the National 'board of Certified "Counselors Foundation's prestigious Minority Fellowship program. Additionally, she has completed extensive research in counseling and has various publications in peer-reviewed journals. Knowledge gained from her work experience and research is shared with students in her courses.

She holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Counselor Education and Supervision, a Master of Arts degree in community counseling, and a Bachelor of Arts in psychology, all from the University of Toledo.

This year's recipient is Dr. Tiffany Hairston from the School of Counseling.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TOLEDO
1872

Gary District High School History

1922 - 1965

Gary District High School does not exist now, sadly to say. If it did, it would be difficult to imagine the school without Joel Height, Anna Wilkerson Bland, William Gatewood, Tom Branch and Jams Wilkerson. Mr. Height started his career in the school as a teacher in 1928; Jack and Anna Wilkerson, Tom Branch, and William Gatewood were appointed in 1932.

The first school in Number 3 (Main Gary), was a six-room frame building, known as the Gary Consolidated School. It was attended by nearby elementary and junior high pupils. Junior high work was first offered in 1913. The senior high school evolved from this school and was named Gary Negro High School in 1922, for classes 7 through 12. Mr. Moon was the principal. Tis frame building burned, but the school continued in make-shift quarters. This school held its first graduation exercises in 1923.

The students attended high school previously in another state or county or even at Kimball High School, which was established in 1914; the only other high school nearby was located at "Ennis," near Mayberry (WV). This school was built in 1888.

Mr. Wilkerson, who was in the class of 1924 previously attended school in Tennessee.

A new frame building was constructed, and this building also burned in 1925. A new brick building was erected at a cost of \$36,000, which include ten classrooms, a gymnasium, library, and principal's office. In September 1926, the school began fall classes in the new building which housed both elementary and high school students.

In 1925, French was added to the curriculum and in 1926 geometry was added. Also, during 1926, "The Junior Monthly" the first school paper was published. Additions to the faculty were SJ. Boyd, Ms. B.C. School, Mr. G.W. Byrd, Ms. R.L. Robinson, and Ms. H.V. Norman.

Mr. Moon, the first principal, died in 1929. Mr. Richard Harris became the principal but was only there for one school term. Mr. James C. Justice became the principal and served for only two terms. In the minutes of the Board of Education, Mr. Tom Branch was listed as the principal in 1934-35, but no one seems to remember that he served in this capacity. Mr. Height became the principal in 1935. It is remarkable that the school had only four principals in its re year history.

In 1925, the Board of Education discontinued the \$5 per month stipend for summer school training for the teachers. Principals in the black schools were to receive a monthly salary of \$188.88, however, \$200 was paid to the white principals. The appointments to the high school from 1924 to 1941 and for 1952 are shown in the table.

On July 16, 1926, the Board of Education considered a report regarding the moral of both teachers and students at the new Gary High School for Black students. The superintendent was authorized by the Board of Education to investigate the rumors and report its findings to the Board. The school had just started its new term in the new building and already they were having problems.

The school population of Gary grew rapidly. In August 1927, the Board was petitioned by the Gary Parent and Teacher Association to alleviate the crowded conditions. The Board of Education decided to construct a new school next to the existing building. This was the first brick elementary school which now stands next to the High School.

The depression years of the 1930's caused a reduction in the salaries for teachers throughout the area. In July 1932, all salaries were reduced by 10 percent, or to the minimum salaries commensurate to the certificates.

At that time, all employees were required to sign an agreement in addition to their contract. This document gave the Board the authority to decrease or increase salary as stipulated in the contract. Also, the Board was given authority to reduce the school term to less than nine months if deemed necessary.

Special teachers were first assigned to the Gary School in 1933. In that year, Mr. William Gatewood was assigned as the manual training instructor at Gary. Mr. Hough was assigned the band instructor in Gary in 1939. He was given \$10 a month stipend for traveling expenses since he also was the band instruction at Kimball High School the Board provided the money to purchase music instruments - - \$350 for white schools and \$275 for black schools.

During the 1937-38 school term, Gary assigned its first commercial training teacher, Lena Board. Ms. Hight recalled the problems that Mr. Height encountered with the Board of Education to start a commercial education class in Gary. She stated that Mr. Height approached the Superintendent of Schools who was asked where he expected his students to get jobs as typist or bookkeepers. The Superintendent stated that he could not for see them being hired in the county. Mr. Height stated that he wanted his students to leave the county to pursue jobs throughout the United States. Although Mr. Height requested thirty typewriters the Superintendent approved only fifteen. Nevertheless, when Mr. Height returned to school, he received a call from Mr. Tom Branch informing him that thirty typewriters had been delivered. The school did not have a classroom to house the class, the storeroom down the hall from Mr. Height's office was cleared out to begin the Commercial education class in the fall of that year.

Gary High School had its share of out-of-state students. Since Virginia schools terminated at the end of the 11th year, students came from Virginia to attend their 12th year at Gary High. Most colleges required twelve years of secondary schooling to be admitted as first-year students in college. Those students from the state of Virginia who were fortunate to have relatives in West Virginia were given the opportunity to enter Gary High.

At the beginning of the 1954-55 term, the students were given option of remaining in Gary Negro High or transferring to another neighborhood school. Many of the students remained at Gary Negro High. This Agreement continued until 1965, when the diminishing enrollment and lack of teachers to fill the vacancies took their toll on academic courses necessary for college requirements. The Board of Education declared, "maintaining the school was a financial liability. The school then became an area elementary school. It remained so until 1975 when the school was closed permanently.

Until the establishment of the U.H. Prunty School, Gary High School, during the mid-1950s, was faced with the challenge of preparing its students for non-existing jobs in the county. The school became involved in the concept of a countywide vocational training school for its students The U.S. Steel Company provided the land and the building material for the school. The school served all the high schools in the county. The classes were divided into morning and afternoon sessions, one hundred students per session. Kimball and Elkhorn students attended morning sessions while Gary and Excelsior students attended afternoon sessions The students were responsible for the school's construction. The first principal of the school was Mr. W. C. Spencer who was also the instructor for the brick mason class, other instructors included:

- Mr. Arrington – Body and Fender
- Mr. Law – Welding and
- Mr. Davis – Drafting.

In 1960, a class in cabined making was introduced; Mr. Ross was the instructor. The U.S. Steel Company provided the property as the football field. The maintenance and electricity for night games were also b=provided by the company. The field was used by both the Bulldogs and the Coal Diggers. The coaches coordinated the schedules for the use of the field,

The bells that rang loudly in joyous praise for the 1954 Supreme Court decision for *Brown vs. Board of Education* to desegregate schools in the United States.

GDHS Graduate Will be 100 Years Old on October 17, 2021



Ellis Ray Williams, Sr. was born in Newberry, SC on October 17, 1921. He is the youngest of seven children. His late parents are Reverend William and Mattie Louise Dean Williams. The family moved to Gary, WV in 1928 to take advantage of economic and educational opportunities. Dr. Williams graduated from Gary District High School in 1940 and served as Class President from the 7th through 12th grade(s). He was initiated into Alpha Tau Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi, December 1941. Dr. Williams was married to his lovely wife, Christine Frances (Neal) Williams for 72 years, who also graduated from Bluefield State College, class of 1944. The couple have seven children, ten grandchildren. They were residents of McDowell County, WV for 93 years.

He later entered Bluefield State College, where he received a Bachelor of Science, English, and Social Studies, Cum Laude in 1947. He received his master's degree in Sociology and Industrial Education in

1952 from West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV. Later, Dr. Williams attended Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg VA, receiving a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Education. Honorary Doctor of Letters, conferred by West Virginia University in 2019.

This gentleman was a great sports enthusiast:

- Co-Captain of football team, 1942
- Captain Big Blues football team, 1946
- Lettered in football 1940, 1941, 1942 and 1946



Bluefield State
C O L L E G E

- **Bluefield State College**
Adjunct Instructor in Sociology, Bluefield State College
- **Wyoming County Board of Education**
Industrial arts instructor, basketball, and football coach
- **West Virginia Community Action Directors Association**
Adult Education, Transitions Instruction
- **West Virginia Department of Interior**
Mining Instructor
- **Sears Roebuck & Company**
Title I Home Improvement Contractor

Dr. Williams is/was a member of the following Organizations, and Community Services:

- Alpha Upsilon Boule of Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity
- American Legion (*lifetime*)
- Bluefield State College Alumni Association (life member, National Board Chaplin)
- County Commission, McDowell County, WV
- Disabled Veterans Association (*life member*)
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity (*life member*)
- Kimball Memorial Building Restoration Committee
- Kimball Memorial Building Board of Directors
- McDowell County Economic Development Authority Board of Directors
- McDowell County Museum Commission
- NAACP Life and Golden Heritage Member
- NAACP McDowell County Chapter President, 18 years
- NAACP. WV State Conference of Branches Finance Committee an Education Committee
- Selective Service System, 20 years
- St. James Missionary Baptist Church, various capacities
- Tug River Health Association Board of Directors
- Tug River Community Heath Care Foundation
- Welch Area Chamber of Commerce.

Dr. Williams Philosophy includes stressing the importance of tolerance in a multi-ethnic society, sobriety in fulfilling individual ambitions, doing all things with heartfelt discretion and the philosophical need for moderation in all things.

We honor you, Sir!

Fellow Garyites, let us all wish Dr. Williams a Happy 100th Birthday!!



MCDOWELL COUNTY HISTORY

West Virginia Athletic Union Tournament

(Pictured is Gary District High School's Basketball Team, 1939).

On March 19, 1925, basketball teams from eleven of West Virginia's 24 African American high schools took the court at West Virginia State College (now University) in Institute, WV for the first West Virginia Athletic Union (WVAU) state basketball tournament. Lincoln High School of Wheeling defeated Kimball, 25 – 24, in the final game to win the championship. The tournament grew as the number of Black high schools grew.

Twenty-two teams played in 1930, but by 1938 the state was divided into four (4) regions and the winners and runners-up from each region advanced to the eight-team, single-elimination WVAU state tournament. During the early years teams from the southern part of Genoa (Beckley), were dominant. That was where the heaviest concentration of Black West Virginia players lived. Locations such as McDowell County's Kimball, Gary District, and Excelsior (war), were introduced. By the 1930s and 1940s, the tournament had become the traditional end-of-the season event.

FORMER SUPER MODEL - MS. JUANITA WILKERSON (Fly Mama)

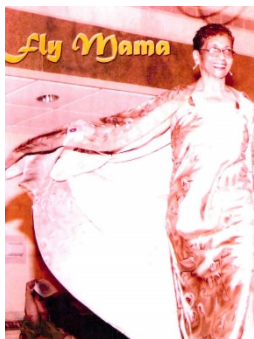


At 94 years old, Junita Wilkerson is still a person who people instantly fall in love with. She is sweet, sassy, funny and engaging. On her more talkative days, she often greets people with, “How’re you doing boo?” It is easy to see why she previously volunteered to serve on the Gary District High School D.C. Chapter’s Hospitality Committee.

Juanita loves singing and dancing and, word on the street is that she is an ace balloon volleyball player.

She loves fashion and beautiful things and always compliments others on their choice of outfits. If presented with a choice in outfits or accessories, she will evaluate each choice with a discerning eye and then excitedly say, “Oh, put that one on me!”

In July, Juanita was delighted to find that she still fit in one of her fancy cocktail dresses from decades ago and joined this year’s virtual GDHAA Virtual Annual Meeting and Awards Program. She was very touched when GDHAA’s President, Dr. Harris, led the attendees in singing Happy Birthday to her. After a year-plus of COVID safety restrictions on socializing, the virtual reunion changed her outlook that day from, “I’m old and I’m sick” (she’s not sick) to dancing while “rollating (using a walker)” down the hall. For this, we are deeply grateful. It is not often that Juanita, who was born in Thorpe, WV in May 1927, can interact with others who share a common history and love of “home.” Though she has lived in the Washington, DC area for decades, she will always be a proud West Virginian at heart.



Unfortunately, a vast number of Juanita’s brothers and sisters – Ulysses, Annie, Helen, Ruth, James, Walter, and Charles – have passed. If you know any of her former friends or extended family who have missed her and would like to reconnect, please contact Alison Hwang at:

Alibabanyc@protonmail.com

Newly Elected Member of The National GDHAA Board Directors

Director Ronald Bell



Ronald Bell is a member of the Organization through National-at-Large Membership. Ronald and his four siblings (DeLores, Nathaniel, Jerome, and Larry) graduated from Gary High School. After graduating, he was employed for five years at the U. S. Steel Corporation Cleaning Plant as a chief operator. He always had a passion for trucking, for this reason, he attended the Charlotte Trucking School in North Carolina to receive training and qualifying to become a CDL long distance tractor trailer driver. With the help of his mother, Ms. Cumy Bell Lawrence, he became owner/operator of Lee's Trucking Company, which operated in all fifty states. In 1990, Ronald became employed as a CDL tractor trailer driver from

Local Union 639 ABF Trucking Company after 25 years.

Ronald was a participant in the negotiations for the 2020 Reunion with Marriott Hotel in Arlington, VA. He assisted in the solicitation of proposals, and the negotiations for a number of the activities – prearranged tours to the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial.

Truly a man of God, Ronald has been an active member of Mt. Ennon Baptist Church in Clinton, Maryland for over 25 years. He is a member of the Male Chorus and the Gospel Unity Choir. He also serves in the Men's Ministry which includes working in the Food Bank, feeding the homeless and escorting seniors to appointments and assists them when needed in their homes. Ronald is married to Shirlitta Bell and has three daughters, Cumy, LaRhonda and Taeler.





Your Loved One(s) who transitioned and was a student or dependent of a Gary District High or Gary High School graduate, leaves a legacy through their walk of faith that does more than point us back to a wonderful life remembered. It also points us forward in hope to an amazing celebration that is to come. Within the last few months, the following individuals, transitioned to be with the Heavenly Father, there may have been others:

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- ❖ Doris Holloway-King
 - ❖ Henry Neal Richardson
 - ❖ Ronnie English
 - ❖ Col/Ret. Vandy L. Miller
 - ❖ Cheryl (Geter) Grace
 - ❖ Carmen Anderson Goode
 - ❖ Peggy Cloyd
 - ❖ Dorothy Lapsley
 - ❖ Joanne Smith
 - ❖ Roland Stephney, Jr.
 - ❖ Edwin Wilkerson
 - ❖ Corcoran Holt
 - ❖ Charles Nathaniel Ratcluff
 - ❖ Viola English
 - ❖ Shelia Cunningham
 - ❖ Joseph Alexander Forbes
 - ❖ Jannie Marie White Burks
 - ❖ Ernestine Davis Pendagrass
 - ❖ James Daniels
 - ❖ Henry Neal Richardson
 - ❖ Eclester O'Neal
 - ❖ Brenda Maxwell
 - ❖ Yvonne Maxwell Barker
 - ❖ Kenneth Maxwell
 - ❖ Larry Lane
 - ❖ Frederick Ray Rash
 - ❖ Jannie White
 - ❖ Evelyn Joanne (Smith) Williams
 - ❖ Jordan M. Smith
 - ❖ Frank Buenrostro
 - ❖ **Mayor Larry Hairston, Gary, WV**

