



James Gentry Jackson

May 14, 1929 - April 29, 2020

As the fourth child of the late Marion Jackson, Sr. and Allie Ward-Jackson, James Gentry Jackson was born on May 14, 1929, in Dallas, Texas. The early stages of his education were developed in the public schools of "West Dallas" where he formed a strong family bond with his parents and siblings. The fond memories of his early life, while growing up in West Dallas, would become the foundation for a wealth of "tale and lore," shared over many years, and with multiple generations of family and friends.

Gentry moved to the Bay Area, in Northern California in the mid-1940s and completed his formal secondary education at Alameda High School in Alameda, California. In 1950, shortly after graduation, he was drafted into the U.S. Army, later spending a portion of his tour of duty in Iceland, which for him, was an unforgettable experience. The US Military, allied with European Armed Forces, brought an end to World War II in the European Theater in early May of 1945. Six years later, in 1951, Gentry began his "Overseas Tour of Duty" in Iceland, during a period of global peacetime. With warm Summer days of 68-77 degrees, and having much off duty time available, and little to occupy it, Gentry participated in baseball competition along with his fellow servicemen. Reflecting the racial divide which existed in the US Armed Forces during that era, oftentimes, Black servicemen competed against White servicemen, within Gentry's battalion, allowing him to hone-up his skills as a baseball player. Gentry's upper body build and strong legs made him a natural for many positions, however, he played the shortstop position best, and was also excellent as a base runner, and fast-ball hitter. Despite the racial discrimination yet existing in the US Armed Forces, Gentry was able to earn the rank of PFC (E-3) before ending his tour of duty in the United States Army with an Honorable Discharge on September 29, 1952.

With his re-entry into civilian life, Gentry returned to the Bay Area and tried out as a baseball player on the Negro National League's San Francisco Cubs team in early 1953. In the prior year, 1952, the San Francisco Cubs' organization evolved out of the San Francisco Sea Lions. When Gentry joined the league, the Cubs team was "Barnstorming" all over the segregated United States. One of his highest joys during his baseball career

was having played in several games with the first black female to play professional baseball, Marcenia "Toni" Stone, who played for the San Francisco Sea Lions from 1945 - 1953. She was traded off to the Kansas City Monarchs five months after Gentry joined the SF Cubs.

Following five and one-half years of playing baseball with the Negro National League, Gentry met and married Mae Frances Toney-Miles on November 29, 1959. Into this union, nine children were melded together. With a new bride and fresh new responsibility, Gentry joined the staff at Moore Shipbuilding and Repair Company in Oakland, CA. After two years, he responded to an opening at the Unified School District in Berkeley, CA, and was hired as a custodian. Even as an entry level employee, Gentry quickly began to command respect as a loyal and trusted employee and colleague, progressively rising in areas of admiration and responsibility.

After thirty-one years of continuous employment, he retired from the Berkeley Unified School District in 1992, having risen up through the ranks, and gained the title of "Director of Maintenance and Custodial Services" for the entire Berkeley Unified School District.

For more than twenty-five years, Gentry held Christian membership at Bethel Missionary Baptist Church in Oakland, California before joining his wife Mae, and the rest of the family, as a member at Brookins African Methodist Episcopal Church in Oakland, in 1989.

For sixty years, Gentry reigned as the patriarch of the expansive Jackson-Miles family, spread out over Northern and Southern California, and in many other regions of the country. As an established tradition, on every major holiday, Gentry and Mae, would either host or direct the hosting of family gatherings at the family home or one of the children's home.

As the man of the family, Gentry was loved and respected as a family man. His daughters, sons, and his sons and daughters-in-law loved and admired him as a role model. He bonded easily with all 24 of his grandchildren, and 31 great-grandchildren, giving them high-fives, teasing them, and telling them stories about any and everything while showering them with loving attention.

Gentry was immaculate about everything he did, everything he had, and about all the things he surrounded himself with. He was known in the family, and by those in his friendship circle, as a fashion icon, always well-dressed with handsome looking, and color-coordinated custom-tailored suits and shirts, accessorized with brightly polished shoes. He would always help Mae keep the family home spotless, and in excellent order, by

vacuuming carpets, polishing furniture, and doing the dishes.

Affectionately known as Mr. Jackson by many of his neighbors, Gentry could be seen gardening in the yard or polishing his spotless, shining, and well-kept "Lexus" automobile, up to his ninetieth birthday. There was no yard nor automobile in the neighborhood better groomed and well maintained than his.

Aside from his short-lived professional baseball career, Gentry was a sports enthusiast and an accomplished athlete. He was an excellent amateur golfer and continued to outscore anyone who joined him on the more than 50 golf courses he played throughout the country. His excellent "Eye and Hand Coordination" made him a natural for the games of golf and baseball. He continued to out-score each of his sons, sons-in-law, and grandsons, even as recently as Spring 2019, when he was 90 years old!

As an athlete in the mid-1950s, Gentry played on barnstorming teams in the Negro League, traveling around the United States. He played the position of short-stop for the San Francisco Cubs, and had pictures and other memorabilia of his baseball career proudly displayed on the walls of his "man-cave" at the family's home in Oakland. Whenever he was asked about his time in the Negro League, Gentry, who was a great story-teller, would share captivating stories about life as a player on the field, in the locker room, staying and eating in establishments for Negroes only. He would also recount events about some of the baseball greats, like Josh Gibson, Satchel Paige, Ernie Banks, and Willie Mays, just to name a few.

Not surprisingly, baseball was his favorite sport, and one in which he excelled, but during the last thirty plus years of his life, Gentry was an avid fan of both the San Francisco Giants and the Oakland A's. He also kept up with the seasonal progress of local Bay Area professional sports teams such as the Golden State Warriors, the Oakland Raiders and the San Francisco 49ers. He was a fountain of knowledge regarding not only professional sports figures and competitive teams, but he also kept up with global and national politics and current issues. For him, every day began with a careful scanning of the Oakland Tribune Newspaper, which became his favored and trusted source for news and current events. He was a credible source for insight around many subjects, including politics, economics, and social events.

Gentry enjoyed passionate discussions about athletes and sports teams with his sons, sons-in-law, and other family members and friends. As a big fan of Tiger Woods, he rarely missed a Sunday afternoon championship's final round, watching Tiger stroll down the eighteenth fairway dressed in his signature "Black and Red" rally colors, then stepping

onto the putting green to clinch another title, just before wooing the massive crowd, and finally checking into the Clubhouse.

Never was there a stronger, more respected, and greater love reciprocation between a man, his wife, and his family, than the one between Gentry and his. On Wednesday, April 29, 2020, at 9:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time, Mr. James Gentry Jackson, stepped into the Clubhouse and turned in his final Scorecard, one of impeccable quality.

Mr. James Gentry Jackson was preceded in death by his brothers Willie (Dub) Jackson and Marion (Jack) Jackson, and his sisters Earline Ramsey and Janice Webster.

He leaves to cherish his loving memory: his wife, Mae Frances Jackson of Oakland, CA; one sister, Shirley Elmore of Seattle Washington; special niece and great nephew Barbara and Manuel Jones of Richmond, CA; children: James Alton Eagleton (Betty) of Oakland, CA; Ronnie Jackson of Oakland, CA; Eleanor Browne (Gaston) of Oakland, CA; Patricia Monserrate (Hernan) of Arlington TX; Richard (better known as Kiki) Jackson (Precious) of Lathrop, CA; Rev. Donnell Miles (Rev. Ethel) of Stockton, CA; Florence Boyd (Rev. "J" Edgar) of Los Angeles, CA; Gregory Miles (Mary) of Hayward, CA; LaVete Carson (Bill) of Oakland, CA; and Rev. Antoinette Miles of Concord, CA; twenty three grandchildren: Roshelle Osagie (Uwa) of McKinney, TX; Katanya Wilson (Keith) of North Hollywood, CA; Miranda Monserrate of Arlington, TX; Angelina Lowe (Alexander) of Ervine, TX,; Shanette Chapman of Antioch, CA; Melvin Marcus of Chicago, IL; Gentry James Eagleton of Oakland, CA; Damon Miles of Oakland, CA; Edonte Hicks of Tracy, CA; David Miles (Shannon) of Fresno, CA; Eric Devereaux of Riverside, CA; Jonathan Devereaux of Seaside, CA; Kim Folks (Derek) of Aurora, CO; Tamara Tolson (LaPedra) of Manhattan, NY; Evette Browne, Jennifer Browne and Eric Browne of Oakland, CA; Ebony Miles of Hayward, CA; Felicia Murdock (Michael) of Sacramento, CA; Michael Spencer, of the Philippine Islands; Rickie Cox of Vallejo, CA; Darva Satcher (Daraka) of Atlanta, GA; Neysa Norris (Paul) of Oakland, CA; William Carson, III of Oslo, Norway; and, Lexus Stromas, of Las Vegas, NV; along with a host of great grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and an extended circle of family and friends.

To ensure the health and safety of our community, we are following all guidelines set by local, state and CDC officials. If you are planning on attending a service, please contact the funeral home in advance, so that we can plan accordingly.

Comments



“ Lynette Wilson sent a virtual gift in memory of James Gentry Jackson



Lynette Wilson - May 17, 2020 at 05:15 PM



“ Celebrating my Uncle Gentry, the sharpest dressing, classiest, loyal, hilarious, joy-carrying, light I've ever known. One of my patriarchs, life examples, and encouragement to stick with family. I'll never forget his support before I was even born through my whole life, especially the most recent with my mom. Rest In Peace King Gentry. Your life lives on through each and every one of us. Will love you forever.

Much love,
Kym

Kym - May 15, 2020 at 01:35 PM



“ I'm grateful to have met Uncle Gentry when I had the chance, even though it was under sad circumstances, I'll never forget the dignity and poise he possessed. Most importantly, the love he showed for his wife and family! I pray all your loved ones are flooded with peace and beautiful memories!

Katina Benenate - May 14, 2020 at 09:13 PM



“ Bobbi Hill lit a candle in memory of James Gentry Jackson



Bobbi Hill - May 14, 2020 at 03:03 PM



“ Phylina L Grubbs sent a virtual gift in memory of James Gentry Jackson



Phylina L Grubbs - May 13, 2020 at 11:57 PM



“ My prayers to the family, cousin Gentry will always be remembered as A staple, a man of great respect !!!!! I remember, having a good conversation about the school district , he gave me some good feedback school system! he will be truly missed, GOD Bless the family you have my deepest condolences!

Love phylina and family



Phylina L Grubbs - May 13, 2020 at 11:03 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of James Gentry Jackson.



May 13, 2020 at 12:09 AM



“ To the entire family i wish you so much love,and thanks for sharing this incredible tower of a man. I will continue to pray for us . Honor to you dear uncle. Pamel Banks,

Pamela Banks - May 12, 2020 at 01:18 PM



“ I will miss my Uncle so much,hard to imagine a world without him.



valarie howard - May 08, 2020 at 01:58 PM



“ Valarie Hloward lit a candle in memory of James Gentry Jackson



valarie howard - May 08, 2020 at 01:55 PM