



Curtis T. Byrd

July 21, 1934 - July 30, 2016

Born CURTIS BOOKER THOMAS BYRD, on July 21, 1934, at home, to the late Amos Byrd and Jo Esther Byrd (nee Blackmore) in Baltimore Maryland. He transitioned this life peacefully on July 30, 2016.

Affectionately called "Poppy" by his children and grandchildren, "Byrd", by old and dear friends, "Baba Curtis", as well as "Mr. B" and "Mr. Curtis". He grew up in the Sandtown-Winchester neighborhood on North Carey Street during the time when marble steps were washed daily with Bon Ami and a scrub brush, people swept their fronts, and respect for elders was commonplace. As a child, Curtis attended Douglas Memorial Community Church with his parents and sister. Curtis was the eldest of two children, and the nephew of many aunts and uncles from the Blackmore and Byrd sides of his family. His sister, Coby Walker, preceded him in death in 2007

Curtis attended PS#450 - Frederick Douglass High School and Morgan State, now Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. While a student at Morgan, in September 1957, he was drafted to the Army. During his time of service, he traveled to several places including Paris, Germany, and Belgium, before he was honorably discharged in September 1959. Upon completion of his service, he enrolled in Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. He also pursued a graduate degree in Business at American University in Washington,

D.C.

A man of many talents, he often shared with us stories about his life, especially about the jobs he held in his youth. One of his first jobs as a teen was as a stock clerk in a neighborhood store. As a young man, he also worked as a driver for a family on Gibson Island commuting between Baltimore City and the Western Shore of the Chesapeake Bay on weeknights. Always gainfully employed, he once worked as a night desk clerk at the Cross Keys Hotel, and even drove a cab while attending college at Morgan.

A loving husband and father, during one of his many conversations, he fondly recalled how he met our mother Jeanette Carol Thomas, at a cabaret. They discovered they'd gone to the same high school though some years apart. When he asked for her telephone number he said she told him it was in the phonebook. He looked her up, and the rest was history. On April 25, 1965, they were married and from this union, Lisa and Melanie Byrd were born. Mommy preceded him in death in 1996.

Never wanting to keep to the traditional way of doing things and always a provider for his family, Curtis taught Adult Education for a company called BFE commuting daily between Baltimore and New York. He had an entrepreneurial spirit and was always thinking of ownership even when it was not popular. So, after obtaining his real estate license in the 60's, he worked as a real estate agent. Soon after, in the 70s, he opened his own lounge and supper club at 419 North Paca Street called The Checkmate. He would often take us to the lounge and give us coins to put in the jukebox. He would let us sit at the bar, eat huge cheese burgers and drink Coca-Cola's with a cherry on top while he worked upstairs in his office (where he also kept a roll-a-way bed in case we ever got sleepy). He later ventured into owning a construction company, building churches in Baltimore City, Turner's Station in Dundalk, Maryland and apartment complexes in Washington D.C.

Curtis loved...jazz. He spoke often of Ella, Sarah, Nina, Nancy, Miles, Dizzy, Thelonious and John. On hot summer days, when the sliding glass doors were open in the living room, he could often be heard playing one of his favorite songs (and ours too) on the piano, "A Night in Tunisia". We would hear him as we rounded the corner and headed up the hill towards the house for dinner. It was a ritual for him to "tickle the ivory" while mommy was in the kitchen cooking. This was relaxation for him after a long days work.

Curtis had a big heart. He genuinely loved his family and his friends. He would give you the shirt off his back or a house for a dollar if you were in need. Even if he hadn't seen you in a while, he was a nostalgic about old times and he didn't care what your lot was in life. He would always say you should be magnanimous. He'd say, "Don't be concerned with what others people do, you worry about what you do and how you treat people." He instilled in us a love for family and of family history. Determined to make a trip to Winnsboro S.C. last summer, he told us to "just make it happen." And we did. It would be his last trip to attend his cousin's funeral. He was happy to see his family down South on King Road and to plant his feet back on the soil of his ancestors land.

Curtis was a critical thinker, an avid reader and a researcher. He loved history and geography, and African history in particular. He was always teaching his family about Ancient Egypt. He had tons of books, tapes and CDs. He always said, "You should develop a love for learning." Of course, as children we thought that was a dreadful thing to say. Who wants to stay in school and do homework? What he was telling us was to always have a desire for knowledge. Knowledge empowers you and learning never ends. "You can learn from a bum on the street, just open your mind," he would say pointing to his head.

He enjoyed frequenting Everyone's Place African Cultural Center on North Avenue to buy books, etc, and attend meetings. Never one to sit idle, when he lost his sight, he ordered audio tapes from the Library of Congress at the suggestion of the lady who headed up his weekly blind classes at the VA. It was important to him that he keep moving and doing things as he always had.

Curtis enjoyed attending lectures in the Baltimore and DC areas. As early as the 70s, he was into holistic health. He would meditate, do yoga, read, and eat healthy foods. When we would have friends over, they might catch him standing on his head (a slight embarrassment at the time) in a yoga pose. He loved listening to talk radio and calling in on shows to offer his elder wisdom. He was one of the founding members of the Baltimore Black Think Tank at Everyone's Place, where he was always advocating for people of African descent because it was necessary and important to him. He enjoyed the camaraderie of like-minded people he considered friends and looked forward to his Sunday afternoon meetings.

Poppy's presence and good energy will be truly missed. We will long for his hugs and pats on the back, and when we hugged him too long, hearing him say "That's enough," or "I'm gonna charge you". It isn't a day that will go by that we will not think of him and the legacy he left us. He told us he could lead us to the water, but he couldn't make us drink. He'd often say, "What I will give you, money can't buy" and no truer words have been spoken.

He leaves to cherish his beautiful and sacred memory: his daughters, Lisa Michelle and Melanie Patrice Byrd; his grandson, Shane Amon Byrd Cromwell; his grand-daughters, Aminah Shukura Byrd Ebron and Assata Noni Byrd Ebron; two nieces, Tracy Rogers and Robyn White; and one great-nephew Keith Rogers; and a host of family members and friends whom he treasured deeply.

We will remember him telling us as children not to fear death because, as he would say, "You are NOT your body".

When asked how old he was by his grandchildren, or anyone, he would always respond, with a chuckle, "I am older than Time and Space". And when we told him we loved him, he'd say, "I love you, Infinity times infinity! Do you know what infinity means? "Yes Daddy," we would say...

Cemetery Details

Garrison Forest Veterans

11501 Garrison Forest Road
Owings Mills, MD

Previous Events

Public Viewing

AUG 14. 10:00 AM - 6:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Homes - West Baltimore
4300 Wabash Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21215
(410) 542-2400
info@marchfh.com

Family Hour

AUG 14. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Homes - West Baltimore
4300 Wabash Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21215
(410) 542-2400
info@marchfh.com

Wake

AUG 15. 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Douglas Memorial
1325 Madison Avenue
Baltimore, MD

Service

AUG 15. 11:00 AM (ET)

Douglas Memorial
1325 Madison Avenue
Baltimore, MD

Tribute Wall



“ *Curtis T. Byrd*

October 13, 2022 at 08:33 AM



“ *Bernie Long lit a candle in memory of Curtis T. Byrd*



Bernie Long - August 17, 2016 at 09:31 AM



“ *Necole Jarrett lit a candle in memory of Curtis T. Byrd*



Necole Jarrett - August 17, 2016 at 09:30 AM



“ *Curtis was such a kind loving man. I met him 32 years ago at the age of 18. He was a very special part of our family and will truly be missed. Love and prayers to his family. God rest his soul until we meet again.*



Charlotte Blade Tompkins - August 15, 2016 at 08:53 PM

EH

“ *Eunice Harris lit a candle in memory of Curtis T. Byrd*



Eunice Harris - August 12, 2016 at 04:28 PM

EH

“ *I met Curtis over years ago, I liked him the first time my husband and I met him. He was a wonderful, kind, endearing gentleman. He will be missed. My heartfelt condolences to the family.*

Eunice Harris - August 12, 2016 at 04:18 PM

A.

“ *I am so sorry to hear of your loss. May the family find the loving kindness' of others to be a source of comfort ,as well as knowing God cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7).*

A.H. - August 12, 2016 at 01:21 PM



“ *We the March Family and Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.*

March Funeral Homes - August 09, 2016 at 11:14 AM