



Ernest Elton Barnes

November 21, 1963 - October 23, 2014

EARNEST ELTON BARNES JR. was born in Baltimore, MD, on November 21, 1963 - the day before the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. He was the fifth of five children born to Clarice Xavier Norris Barnes and the youngest son of Ernest Elton Barnes Sr.

As a child, Ernest had a quick mind and could rattle off the make and model of any car at first glance. He could adjust the television and radio when no one else in the house could. He was an altar boy at St. Peter Claver Catholic Church in Baltimore where he attended grade school. Throughout his life he was always well-informed, often having read three newspapers a day. He excelled academically as well.

Ernest was listed in Who's Who Among American High School Students and graduated in 1981 from The Baltimore Polytechnic Institute where he majored in engineering. During the 1980s, he became a champion swimmer, lifeguard and fitness instructor in the use of hydraulic equipment at The Plaza Hotel on Eutaw St., a lifeguard and Nautilus instructor at The Downtown Athletic Club on S. Centre St., and a lifeguard at area camps.

Ernest completed select courses at Catonsville Community College, Loyola College and Towson State University between 1982 and 1984. While at Towson, he was a member of the Society of Physics Students and a FCC - licensed disc jockey for WCVT Radio.

In 1984, Ernest was on the Dean's List at DeVry Institute of Technology in Los Angeles where he studied electronic engineering. In 1989, he received his

Bachelor of Arts degree in Interdisciplinary Studies from The University of Maryland Baltimore County where he made the Honors List and received an award for academic achievement. In that year and in 1990, Ernest merited awards for excellence from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst following his participation in summer seminars on jazz improvisation made possible by a recommendation from renowned drummer Max Roach whom Ernest met at his UMBC commencement.

In 1992, Ernest was one exam shy of a Masters degree in Jazz Music Performance and Education from Queens College, City University of New York, Aaron Copeland School of Music in Flushing. There he was under the tutelage of faculty jazz greats Jimmy Heath, Victor Gaskin, John Faddis and others. His attendance was through a scholarship for excellence in music from the Eddie Barnes Foundation. When he applied for the graduate studies, he wrote: "One is not considered to be a bona fide jazz musician, nor thought to be playing authentic jazz music, if he is merely playing through the skeletal framework of a composition without having a firm understanding of the music's history, philosophy and concepts. It is this knowledge which lends authenticity to both the performance and composition of this unique art form." Sometimes Ernest would go unannounced to the homes of veteran jazz musicians, introduce himself and ask if he could return later "to learn at their feet," he said. Ernest possessed exceptional skills as a jazz musician. His decades of professional experience playing the acoustic bass, electric bass and the bass guitar synthesizer as a freelance musician and independent contractor and operating audio/visual equipment used by television and sound studios enhanced cultural performances locally, nationally and internationally. In recent years he performed with his own Ernie Barnes Quartet and was a charter member of the Sterling Silver Jazz Band, a premiere ensemble known for its "mellow, seamless sound" in its repertoire that includes jazz standards, Latin, R&B and bop. Sterling Silver's pianist and vocalist Guy "Doc" Bragg invited Ernest to be the bassist, joining tenor saxophonist Harold Adams, drummer Darrell Taylor and vocalist Bobette Watts-Hitchcock. Ernest, who

was also known as 'The Big Easy' for his laidback groove, was a regular bassist at The Prime Rib steakhouse in midtown Baltimore. Ernest was a member of the Baltimore-based fusion group PDFOP. It was formed in 2006 by Ori Boker and Jason Denkevitz. PDFOP aims to record original instrumentals in a cross between fusion, jazz and progressive rock. The band's first album, the self-titled "PanDimensional Federation of Planets," features Ernest on bass guitar, Nick Costa on drums, Jason on guitar and Ori on keyboards. Ernest also performed many times with Thomas "Whit" Williams, a saxophonist, mentor and major figure in the jazz scene. In 1992, Ernest toured the United States and Europe with jazz great Jackie McLean. In 1993, he toured Europe with the Illinois Jacquet Big Band and did an advertisement project with Max Roach. In 1994, Ernest toured Turkey, Greece, Italy and Spain on behalf of the United States Department of Defense, entertaining military and government personnel. He performed with drummer Bobby Thomas and guitarist Ted Dunbar.

Even when his health prohibited him from regular Mass participation, Ernest remained a very reverent person when it came to prayer. He never rushed through his praises and petitions. His favorite saints (who included his mother) were those known for carrying petitions to Christ when situations seemed hopeless. Ernest cared deeply about the safety of his local community and participated regularly in community meetings.

Ernest shared his experiences with students as a substitute teacher in Baltimore City public schools in 1995 and 1996. One of his stated goals in life was to "become proficient enough in the subject of jazz to be able to teach it on the college level, ideally after acquiring a doctorate in either composition or ethnomusicology focusing on jazz music, and learning this music firsthand from some of its originators so that I, too, may pass it on to future generations."

Cherishing Ernest's memory are his siblings: Robert John Norris Jr. and wife Teri of Inglewood, CA; Carole (Norris) Greene and husband Andre, Barbara

Joanne (Norris) Williston and husband Thomas, and Cynthia Clarice Norris, all of Baltimore, MD; nephews: Marcus Norris and fiancée Devyn Bolden of Los Angeles, CA, Brandon Norris and wife Desiree of Colorado Springs, CO, Jonathan Norris and wife Tanisha of Inglewood, Christian Ravard and wife Jaime of San Marcos, CA; nieces: RoseMarie, Shiree and Ericka Williston and Michelle (Williston) Williams of Baltimore; great nephews and nieces: Sahara Dodson, Cameron and Caleb Davenport, Sara Williston, Andrew Lamon, Nicholas Jackson and Gabriella Law of Baltimore and Brianna Williams of North Carolina; Donovan and Kennedy Norris of Inglewood; Mia, Jasmine and Brandon Norris Jr. of Colorado Springs; Kendal Norris of Los Angeles and Justice Ravard of San Marcos; aunts Lillian Smith and Allenrae Rebecca Hall of Baltimore and Mary Elizabeth Shelton of Minneapolis, MN; goddaughter Tiffany Thompson-Shipley, special lifelong friends Leon Bridges and Daryl Campbell, Neci Williams and Melvina Fawley and a host of devoted cousins, other family and friends.

Cemetery Details

Loudon Park Cemetery

3801 Frederick Ave
Baltimore, MD 21229

Previous Events

Public Viewing

OCT **29**. 8:30 AM - 8:00 PM (ET)

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

Family Hour

OCT **29**. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

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

Wake

OCT 30. 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church
101 Church Lane

Service

OCT 30. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church
101 Church Lane

Tribute Wall



“ *Ernest Elton Barnes*

October 13, 2022 at 08:33 AM



“ *2 files added to the album Ernise and friends*



Darrell - October 28, 2014 at 07:34 PM



When the bible calls death an enemy we see why eventually God will swallow up the enemy death forever what a time to look forward to.

Tee - October 29, 2014 at 11:37 AM



“ *Ernie was the bassist for our jazz band, Sterling Silver. His extraordinary talent and true love of music was really a joy to experience. It was Ernie's suggestion that we play The Nearness of You on our CD and I am so glad to have that memorialized forever. I will miss his teasing me about my vegetarian diet, saying I ate grass sandwiches! Rest in peace my friend. To the family, I am so sorry for your loss and thank you for sharing Ernie with us.*
Bobette Watts-Hitchcock

Bobette Watts-Hitchcock - October 28, 2014 at 03:01 PM

KS

“ I wish to express my sympathy to the family of Mr. Barnes. The loss of a loved one can be difficult and grieving someone you love can take it's toll. A great source of comfort can be found in God's inspired word the bible. The promise of a hopeful future can be found at Revelation 21:3,4 here it promises death will be no more may these words comfort you.

K Smith - October 28, 2014 at 05:12 AM

MF

“ Melvina Farley lit a candle in memory of Ernest Elton Barnes



Melvina Farley - October 27, 2014 at 11:50 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 - October 27, 2014 at 09:22 AM