



Wilbert Vanderbilt Sturdivant Sr.

April 2, 1935 - December 18, 2018

Our beloved WILBERT VANDERBILT STURDIVANT, SR. was born in Baltimore, Maryland on April 2, 1935. He departed this life on December 18, 2018. His family and friends knew him fondly as “Skeeter,” a nickname that he gained as a newborn, when a nurse said he looked like “a little skeeter.”

Skeeter lived an extraordinary life, full of love and joy, and was a valued presence in the lives of others. He was the youngest child of the late Eva and Archie Sturdivant, Sr. He grew up in East Baltimore and graduated from Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School, where he loved to act in plays. After graduating, he worked at Bethlehem Steel in Sparrows Point, Maryland, then served in the U.S. Army.

When he returned from military service, Skeeter married the former Pauline Hardy. He later became a firefighter for the Baltimore City Fire Department, and earned an associate’s degree from the Community College of Baltimore. One of few black firefighters in the city when he started, Skeeter worked for 26 years before retiring. He had a distinguished and courageous career of saving lives while defeating segregation in his fire station.

Skeeter was a dynamic soul, with many interests. He was an early

health and fitness enthusiast who jogged long distances, grew alfalfa sprouts, and practiced yoga decades before it became popular. He was an avid baker and cook, known for making signature cakes (apple nut, chocolate cherry, and graham cracker) and overflowing amounts of oyster dressing for holiday meals. His stand-out gardens and flower pots showcased the brilliant colors of his favorite plants. Skeeter also had a passion for music. He collected albums, sang, whistled, yodeled, studied piano, and developed an enduring love of the harmonica, which he taught himself to play. He always kept a harmonica with him, and played sweet music on it everywhere he went.

Above all else, Skeeter loved people. An excellent father and grandfather, he made his children and grandchildren his top priority. He was an exemplary family member, friend, and neighbor who brought people together, and mastered the art of being there—on time or early—for others. He was “Uncle Skeeter” to a countless number of the younger people in his life. Skeeter also had a close bond with his father and brothers, who created their own vocabulary and affectionately referred to each other as “Cho.” He brightened every setting with his hearty smile and laughter, warm hugs, and memorable expressions like “Fantabulous!” “God bless you!” and “Have a wonderful day!” He stayed close to people over long years and distances, and especially loved reunions with family and old friends.

Skeeter remained active and fully engaged in life in his later years. He regularly arose at 5:00 a.m. to read the Bible, exercise at the health spa, swim, or walk at the local track, and meet friends for morning coffee. He was a faithful member of Zion Baptist Church in Baltimore where, as “Brother Sturdivant,” he sang with the Voices of Zion, Men’s Choir, and Comfort Choir,

and was a Safe Haven Network volunteer for neighborhood youth. He was also a proud member of Dunbar High School's Class of 1953, and generously committed his time to numerous other family and community activities. Through it all, Skeeter always found time to be an ever-present, warm-hearted treasure of a man in the lives of those who knew him.

Skeeter's wife, Pauline Sturdivant, oldest son, Rodric Sturdivant, and four siblings, Otis White, Louise Huff, Walter Sturdivant, and Archie Sturdivant, Jr., preceded him in death. He leaves to cherish his memory: a son, Wilbert Sturdivant, Jr.; two daughters, Judith Murray and Jocelyn Sturdivant; a devoted niece, Tammy White; his caring companion, Phyllis Battle; his sisters- and brother-in-law, Shirley Chapman, Marjorie Sturdivant, and James Hardy (Loris); eight grandchildren, Kaia, Lyrissa, Nicholas, Noah, Adam, Michael, Marley, and Maya; seven great-grandchildren; an aunt, Katherleen Jones; and many other nieces, nephews, cousins, relatives, and friends.

Previous Events

viewing

JAN 3. 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

JAN 3. 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

JAN 4. 10:00 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

Zion Baptist Church
1700 N. Caroline Street
Baltimore, MD 21213

Service

JAN 4. 10:30 AM (ET)

Zion Baptist Church
1700 N. Caroline Street
Baltimore, MD 21213

Tribute Wall



“ *Wilbert Vanderbilt Sturdivant Sr.*

October 13, 2022 at 08:33 AM



“ *Always a bright light and warm spirit. Just realizing that you and my grandfather were brothers. The conversations I wish we could have had. Rest in peace Uncle Skeeter and sorry I missed your homegoing service. Hope you and Mousey can share a laugh or two in heaven.*

DiTanya - June 02, 2021 at 10:12 PM



“ *Holt/Nivens Family lit a candle in memory of Wilbert Vanderbilt Sturdivant Sr.*



Holt/Nivens Family - January 03, 2019 at 03:33 PM



“ *Mr. Skeeter showed us love, compassion and respect for others. We shall remember him as a gentleman, firefighter and musician. The 8 AM walkers at Randallstown Community Center, Liberty Sr. Center Fitness Center and Dee.*



Dolores Dixon - January 03, 2019 at 02:01 PM

NF

“ *Nevin, Sherry, Valter and the Lee Family purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Wilbert Vanderbilt Sturdivant Sr..*



Nevin, Sherry, Valter and the Lee Family - January 03, 2019 at 01:02 PM

LB

“ *Love, Monica & Brian Keister and Jennifer Burnette purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Wilbert Vanderbilt Sturdivant Sr..*



Love, Monica & Brian Keister and Jennifer Burnette - January 01, 2019 at 02:14 PM

EG

“ *SKEETA HAS BEEN A DEAR FRIEND TO ME ALWAYS .I WILL MISS HIM AND HIS KIND ATTENTION.. HE STOOD WITH MY EX HUSBAND AND ME AS HIS AND MY BEST MAN. TO THE FAMILY MY PRAYERS AND THOUGHTS ARE WITH YOU.*

EARLINE GILES - December 27, 2018 at 07:30 PM

WC

You have my deepest sympathy in transition of skeeter. We had good times at dunkin donuts discussing how blessed we are. He would play his harmonica and lift our spirits. Rest in peace skeeter.

William Cunningham - December 30, 2018 at 05:24 PM

HP

“ *TO the Sturdivant family
We will miss uncle Skeeter he was always there for us when our
father passed in 1972
Chris, Michael, and Erick send our love to you guys and we will
keep you in our prayers
can you just hear that Harmonica in Heaven?*

HILDA PHILLIPS - December 23, 2018 at 10:20 PM

HP

“ *HILDA PHILLIPS lit a candle in memory of
Wilbert Vanderbilt Sturdivant Sr.*



HILDA PHILLIPS - December 23, 2018 at 10:13 PM

HP

“ *HILDA PHILLIPS sent a virtual gift in memory
of Wilbert Vanderbilt Sturdivant Sr.*



HILDA PHILLIPS - December 23, 2018 at 10:11 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 - December 23, 2018 at 03:40 PM