

*In Loving
Memory
of*



Ulysses Roundtree

Sunrise: April 25, 1931
Sunset: January 31, 2016

Service

Friday, February 12, 2016 - 6:00 p.m.

UNITY FUNERAL CHAPELS, INC.

2352 8th Avenue • New York, NY 10027

Rev. David Jenkins, Officiating



Obituary



New York, N.Y. —**Ulysses Roundtree**, 85, died Thursday, January 31, 2016 at the James J. Peters VA Medical Center, in the Bronx, New York City, following a brief period of rapidly declining health.

A widower for the last nineteen years since his wife, Nellie's death, he was also predeceased by his mother, Daisy Roundtree, father, Jim Roundtree, and sister, Lois Roundtree. He leaves behind his sister, Ida B. McClain and younger brother, Lt Col. (USAF, Retired) Lester J. Roundtree. Other surviving close relatives include aunts: Eloise Cone of Statesboro, Georgia; Eva Childs of Atlanta, Georgia; and Veneria Simmons of Statesboro, Georgia. Surviving nieces include: Mavis O. Sturdivant of San Antonio, Texas; Debra Roundtree of West Palm Beach, Florida; Stephanie McClain of Chester, Pennsylvania; Belinda J. Bailey of San Antonio, Texas; and Daisene Roundtree of Baltimore, Maryland. Surviving stepdaughter, Gwendolyn Gabriel of Bronx, New York; granddaughter, Michelle Tuck of Bronx, New York; daughter-in-law, Asia Stevens of New Jersey. Surviving nephews include: Charles Gale of Bronx, New York; Dennis Gale of Bloomington, Illinois; Lester J. Roundtree, Jr. of San Antonio, Texas; and Duane E. Roundtree of San Antonio, Texas.

Ulysses was born in Statesboro, Georgia and raised in South Florida in and around the town of Belle Glade. His parents separated while he was still attending elementary school. Ulysses and his mother, who was by then a single parent, along with his three other young siblings earned their living working as field hands and migrant workers harvesting the assorted varieties of produce crops grown there. He dropped out of school so that he could work in the fields full time to help his mother support the family.

During his early to late teenage years Ulysses, his siblings, and his mother would find work by traveling by way of old school buses and trucks northeastward harvesting crops along the way. Their travel would usually end in northeastern states such as Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, and New York. They would remain in those northeastern states until all crops were harvested. Only then could they afford to return to South Florida with the hope that crops there were again ready for harvest.

Upon reaching the age of eighteen, Ulysses, as required by law, registered for the draft and was shortly thereafter ordered to report for active duty and basic military training as an Army infantryman. This was during the late stages of the Korean War. After completing his training, Ulysses was deployed overseas for duty where he served the remainder of his mandatory period of service. He returned to the United States and was shortly thereafter honorably discharged from active duty. He returned to Florida to visit friends and family for a few weeks before traveling to New York to establish residence and secure work in that city. Initially, he worked at various jobs but after a relatively short time, he secured work in the building construction industry. He quickly earned the trust and respect of other skilled workers for his expertise as a high level construction scaffold rigger.

Ulysses Roundtree leaves behind many loving family members and outstanding loyal friends to mourn his untimely passing and who will forever remember, honor, and cherish the genuine love that he shared with everyone who crossed his path.

Eulogy

Universally known as "**Tree**" to friends and peers, he is affectionately called "**Uncle Tree**" by younger generations and his considerable extended family. Throughout his life he was the proverbial uncle and friend in every sense of the word--endearing, supportive and liberal while simultaneously, being as stern and uncompromising as he needed to be.

He was always an adoring and protective son to his mother--faithfully calling at regular intervals to check on her. Of course, when moved by "bottled spirits", those inquiries might come at any hour of the night or day but they always began with the words: "Are you okay?"

He was equally protective of other family members. Honorably discharged from the Army with the rank of sergeant, he initially opposed his teenaged brother's desire to join the Air Force. Still, he provided the timely emotional and financial support for him to do so and was rewarded by his brother attaining the rank of Lt Colonel, in an era when such heights were rarely obtainable for Blacks. He also provided critical support and shelter for an incarcerated nephew and his family during an extremely trying and turbulent time for them. Were it not for him, the unimaginable weight of those years and events would have simply been unbearable.

Looking for an old girl friend, Tree came to Harlem straight out of the Army in 1954 and instantly fell in love with its vibrant culture and people. Although he had lived and worked in five states and had been to Japan and Korea, Harlem was in a golden era that seemed to make it the center of the world and he wanted to be a part of it. He met and joined a small circle of friends that enjoyed socializing and popular music. Among them was his future wife of thirty-five years (Nellie); together they formed a core group that would become life-long friends.

One of his favorite areas to socialize was in and around 135th St. and 7th Avenue, where he lived (over the Big Apple Bar) for three years. Within three blocks to the north and south of it were an abundance of well known nightspots and eateries including Smalls Paradise, Count Basie's, Wells', Hilda's Cage, Joe & Sylvia Robinson's, Snooky's Sugar Bowl, The Renaissance and the original Red Rooster. Yet, Uncle Tree's little circle was equally content to socialize in their own homes. And more often than not, that's where you'd find them--cooking and chasing "bottled spirits" with sounds of jazz underpinning and shaping every thought and dance move.

An abundance of "spirits" would invariably lead Uncle Tree to lengthy late night sermons about the virtues of life. But he would frequently produce jewels--like a nod to the use of John Henry (rather than John Hancock) when referring to the use of your signature or granting an approval. (And woe to the unlucky soul who didn't know who John Henry was). Another gem is the folly of trying to figure out fools. According to Uncle Tree, Einstein told President Roosevelt that it was easier to figure out the makings of an A-Bomb than the mind of a fool. Hence, we shouldn't be wasting any time on them.

Although he spent his last three months in hospitals and nursing homes, he managed to enjoy some quality moments with old friends and family members--looking at family photos and listening to some of his favorite artists. An unexpected moment of humor came when he was asked if there was any artist he would like to hear that hadn't been played for him yet. An incurable flirt, he affected an impish smile, looked at a young nurse and said, "Bull Moose Jackson". Jackson was a notoriously bawdy x-rated vocalist and band leader from the 1940s.

An enduring idea was one of his final wishes: the establishment of a modest family scholarship for children who either want to go or are currently in college. For this is an idea that he left both an outline and resources to start. Hence, even in his physical absence his presence will be felt and through the scholarship. In effect, he is still checking and asking, "Are you okay?"

Reflections

Aunt "Sister" & Aunt Eva (maternal aunts):

You were our little brother and nephew at the same time. God bless you for your strength and caring personality. We pray that our love for you brought you as much comfort as your love did for us.

Gwen (Stepdaughter):

He work hard all of his life and did the best he could to care and provide for his family. May God give him eternal rest and peace.

Mya (great grandniece):

I love you Uncle Tree and miss you very much.

Micki (childhood friend):

My family and I have known and loved Tree for nearly 70 years. It was my sister (Naomi) and I who picked him up from the train station when he came home from the Army looking for her. God bless him. I will always remember and cherish our love and friendship.

Stephanie (maternal niece):

Uncle Tree, I will miss you greatly. You are my favorite uncle and second dad, our long talks and the memories you shared of my mothers childhood are priceless. Loving you always, your niece Stephanie and family.

Brittany (maternal grandniece):

I love you Uncle Tree and will miss you greatly.

Zenobia (maternal grandniece):

We love you and value all of the time we spent together. Thank you for your hospitality and may God bless you.

Debbi (maternal niece):

I value and can recall so much about Uncle Tree that I could write a book about him. He was and is my favorite uncle and I feel extremely fortunate to have had him in my life. Much love and blessings to all of the family and friends who cared and shared in his life.

Dennis (maternal nephew):

Ulysses Roundtree (Tree) was a lot of things to a lot of people.

I remember him laying out the 5 boroughs for me one evening. In less than an hour, he drew a complete map on a napkin and outlined major uptown, downtown and crosstown streets and freeways. I used that napkin for years when I visited the city and it always got me back on track from the FDR to HRD to Amsterdam to Broadway, to 125th, 42nd Street and 8th Avenue.

Whether he was explaining how to run a business from the trunk of a Caddie (chain lock the lid with a padlock) or how to find anything on the street corner (never buy anything from a store), or how to make a pay phone call with no money, he was alive when he was in the streets. He was a kid from Georgia by way of Florida and many stops while working the seasons and became a New Yorker.

Visiting the city will never be the same. He's gone now, but he left a mark in the fabric of New York City that I will not forget.



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Order of Service

Processional

Selection

Scripture Readings

Prayer

Selection

Acknowledgements

Remarks

Obituary

Selection

Eulogy

Committal

Viewing

Recessional

Interment

*Calverton National Cemetery
Calverton, New York*



I'm Free

*Don't grieve for me, for now I'm free
I'm following the path God laid for me
I took his hand when I heard Him call
I turned my back and left it all.*

I could not stay another day.

*To laugh, to love, to work or play.
Tasks left undone must stay that way,
I found that peace at the close of day.*

*If my parting has left a void,
Then fill it up with remembered joy.*

*A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss,
Oh, yes these things I too will miss.*

*Be not burdened with times of sorrow,
I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.*

My life's been full, I savored much.

Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.

*Perhaps my time seemed all too brief,
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.*

*Lift up your heart and share with me,
God wanted me now, He set me free!*



-author unknown



Acknowledgement

*The family acknowledges with deep appreciation all acts of
kindness extended to them during this bereavement hour.
May God bless you for all your thoughtfulness and concern.*

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