

## Mr. James V. Stewart

The purpose of life is a life of purpose — Robert Byrne

Mr. James Vernon Stewart of Akron, Ohio, passed away peacefully on April 18, 2011.

He lived a long life, a generous life, a loving life ... a life of purpose.

He leaves behind to cherish his memory, children, Martha Johnson (Bart), James "Kelley" Stewart (Juliet), Rebecca Stewart, James "Preston" Stewart (Dayna), Elisabeth Lillie (Michael), and Micaela Stewart, six grandchildren; sister, Grace Rockhold; devoted family friends; and many dear relatives and lifelong treasured friends.

Born September 25, 1925, in Findlay, Ohio, to parents Anna and Clarence Stewart, he was lovingly raised along with his sister M. June Black, by his proud mother, Anna Stewart Bizzell, in Findlay and Xenia.

Jim, as he was known to most, was also known to some as "Bud/Buddy", "Daddy Jim", and, to others as Mr. Stewart. He was a devoted son, an enterprising worker, and ALWAYS on time. As early as age eight, he was already working after school to help out at home, and to purchase his first "church suit." Wearing this new suit to church, and sometimes to school, brought him immeasurable pride. Little did he know at the time, a nice suit and tie would become a trademark look for the future endeavors of this well dressed man.

Before donning his first suit as a founder of Stewart Funeral Home, Jim was a Mumford Point Marine (later renamed Montford Point), serving from 1943 through 1946. Until the time of his death, he proudly flew the Marine Corps flag at his home, emblazoned with the Marine motto Semper Fidelis "Always Faithful."



Today, many Montford Point Marines also remember their time in North Carolina with the phrase "Loyalty and service in the face of prejudice."

This way of thinking stuck with Jim as he struggled to start a new business in racially conflicted times. After graduating Cum Laude from the University of Cincinnati, College of Embalming, Jim moved to Akron in 1963, and opened Stewart Funeral Home, the city's premier black-owned funeral home, with partner, L. E. Black, Jr. of Youngstown. In keeping with his long-held entrepreneurial spirit, and his loyalty to the black community, he was determined to create a business that would provide exceptional service, and amenities without prejudice. This business later became Stewart & Calhoun Funeral Home; "The Home that Service Built", which continues to operate successfully with son Preston Stewart.

He was a licensed funeral director and embalmer for more than 60 years, and always viewed his work as a faithful service to his communi-

ty. In times of loss, his understanding nature, and attention to detail, ensured that "his families" received the highest care. His artistic work often elicited a well worn term in the black community "the body looked good." Just so you know ... he liked hearing that.

He was an avid collector of black art, antiques, and was, as he liked to say ... "in to numismatics."

He also enjoyed physical fitness, and maintained his habit of speed-walking, swimming, and weight workouts, until his health declined. As a person with years of experience with the human body, he strongly believed that taking care of the body is as important as taking care of the soul.

Jim took care of his soul at Wesley Temple A.M.E. Zion Church, where he was a member, former Trustee and Treasurer. And he prayed with several other local church leaders, whom he counted among his friends.

He was also involved in various civic initiatives, such as, member of the United Way of Summit County-Alexis De Tocqueville and Dorothy O. Jackson Societies; past president of the Summit County Funeral Directors Association; member of the National Funeral Directors Association; member of the Summit County Funeral Directors Association; former member of the Akron Urban League Board; former member of the NAACP Board; former member of the Private Industry Council's Motivational Task Force; NAACP Life Member; member of the Pride of Rubbertown Elks #1594; Life member of the American Legion John Fulton Post #272; past mentor at Urban Ounce of Prevention; Honorary Chair of the Paul Collins Art Exhibition (a benefit for the Akron Urban League Capital Campaign).

He was a 33rd Degree Mason, United Supreme Council, Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Prince Hall Affiliation, Northern Jurisdiction; past vice-president of The Commanders of the Rite. Joining the Masonic Order more than 50 years ago in Southern Ohio, he was a member of Phoenix Lodge #112, and Bezaleel Consistory #15, for the past 45 years.

As a result of his community service throughout the years, Jim received countless awards and accolades.

Jim faithfully served his community, and enjoyed being around his family and friends. He really loved his work. He and was always ready with a quick laugh, a kind ear, and maybe even a shot or two of spirits. He also liked flowers. As a funeral director, Jim handled more flowers than most will see, yet, one of his favorite sayings was "I'll give you your flowers while you're living." And, true to his word ... he gave. It was not always flowers, but, Jim gave his time, his fortune, and he gave his heart, every day that he was on this earth.

Vincit qui patitur ... He conquers who endures - Pensive

Homegoing service will be held Saturday, April 23, 2011 at 12 Noon at Wesley Temple A.M.E. Church, 104 N. Prospect, Akron, OH 44304, Rev. Dr. Ronald J. Fowler eulogizing and Rev. Vince L. Menden officiating. Calling hours will be at the church from 10 a.m. until time of service. Interment at Greenlawn Cemetery. Friends may visit at Stewart & Calhoun Funeral Home, 529 W. Thornton St., Akron, OH 44307, Friday, April 22, 2011 from 12 Noon until 9 p.m. The family will receive friends from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. Masonic service will be held at 7 p.m. Procession will form and condolences may be sent to 1833 Breezewood Dr., Akron, OH 44313. In lieu of flowers, the Family requests that donations be made to the Jim Stewart Scholarship Fund of Akron Community Foundation. Checks can be mailed to the Akron Community Foundation, 345 West Cedar Street, Akron, OH 44307.

STEWART & CALHOUN

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