

# Senator Clarence Blount dies at age 81

Balto. Times 4/18/03

## Called 'Conscience of the Senate'

BALTIMORE —

From the son of sharecroppers, to educator to making history by becoming the first African American majority leader in the Maryland Legislature, Senator Clarence W. Blount made pioneering history in Maryland. He died Saturday from complications of a stroke.

Elected to the senate 31 years ago, Senator Blount rose through the senatorial ranks to become the first African American chairman of a Senate committee — the Economic and Environmental Affairs Committee.

Del. Howard "Pete" Rawlings said, "Senator Blount was one of the main reasons why I entered politics, I joined his political organization years ago. He was an educator and a very successful political leader and he had great integrity. He was clearly a pioneer among black elected officials at the state level across the country. When people described him they always described him as a 'statesman' and that is a very accurate statement."

In addition to his career in education, Blount was also a decorated war veteran.

Blount was born on April 20, 1921 in the town of South Creek, NC, one of four children of the late Lottie and Charles Blount, Sr.

His father worked on a tobacco farm and, as a child, Blount worked alongside his father, doing chores like feeding chickens and working in the fields.

Blount didn't attend school until the family came to Baltimore. At age 10, he began school, but could neither read nor count. He graduated from Douglass High School at age 21, a secret he kept from his schoolmates. He credits dedicated teachers with helping him pass

and graduate.

Blount was drafted into the Army during World War II, just a month after he was admitted to Morgan State College. He was a member of the 92<sup>nd</sup> Infantry in the all-black Buffalo Division. He served in Italy and earned a battlefield commission for removing landmines from a river.

After the war, Blount returned to Morgan, from which he graduated in 1950.

He earned a master's degree in Education from Johns Hopkins University in 1965 and taught geography.

Later, he became principal of Dunbar High School, then went on to become chair of the Social Services Department at CCB (Baltimore City Community College). He rose in ranks as executive assistant to the president of the school.

It was probably his love for education that led him to run for the Maryland Senate. He saw the overcrowding in city classrooms and dedicated his political life to improving education for city students.

He was a staunch supporter of the state takeover of some schools, especially when it came to the amount of money that would be poured into the school system in return for management reforms and the state running the system.

Senator Lisa A. Gladden, who won Blount's seat in the last election, said "He understood the distinct need of city living, he respected his constituents, he loved his constituents. He was a value and an asset not only to the city but to the state. He was my mentor and my friend. If not for him I would not be where I am."

Blount's name was raised as a possible mayoral or congressional candidate and, it was rumored

that, in 1982, Governor Harry Hughes would name him as a running mate.

After three decades in the Maryland Senate, Senator Blount bowed out of the last election, instead endorsing Del. Lisa Gladden for his former seat.

Senator Blount died about 1:30 p.m. Saturday at Kernan Hospital in Baltimore. His wife, Gordine, and other relatives were at his bedside.

His son, Michael C. Blount; a stepson, Mark Chisom and six grandchildren also survive Senator Blount.

A "Celebration of Life" service will be held (April 18) at Morgan State University's Gilliam Fine Arts Center, 2100 Argonne Drive, beginning at 7 p.m. Call 443-885-3103 for directions and information.

Funeral services for Senator Blount will be held on Saturday, April 19 at Gracc Presbyterian Church, 2604 Banister Rd. The wake will begin at 10 a.m.; funeral services will follow at 11 a.m. Interment in Woodlawn Cemetery, 2130 Woodlawn Drive immediately following the service.

The Blount family invites you to send a condolence message to their "Family Guestbook" on the March Funeral Home LifeFiles Remembrance Registry, [www.marchfh.com](http://www.marchfh.com).

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Grace Outreach Development Corporation, c/o Lettie Haynes, 2605 Banister Road, Baltimore, Maryland 21215.