Elroy Wilson, pioneer mortician, memorialized

By Bettye Moss

Elroy Oldredge Wilson was remembered as an innovative funeral director, a friend to fellow morticians and one who gave comfort to many families, often free of charge, during his 53-year career.

The tributes came Tuesday morning during services at the John Wesley United Methodist Church on Ritchie Highway in Glen Burnie.

Mr. Wilson, 88, had made his home in the Glen Burnie community since his retirement in 1974.

The 300 seats in the small church were filled when the family hour began at 11 a.m.

There was standing room only when the pastor, the Rev. Roscoe C. Williams opened the service a hour later.

Yacht Club

Many viewed the remains at the West Baltimore St. Brown-Thompson Funeral Home in downtown Baltimore on Monday morning and Monday evening at the church. He died Saturday, Jan. 8, at Union Memorial Hospital.

Mr. Wilson was buried in the uniform of the Neptune Yacht Club, which he founded in 1954. The three dozen floral pieces included a blue and white display with the yacht club's anchor prominently displayed.

At the head of the mahogany casket was the family's huge bleeding heart of red roses.

Members of the club served as pallbearers. One of them, Wallace Hall, recalled the first meeting was in Wilson's funeral home. He added, "Captian Wilson was the father of our club. He put warmth in our activities and had the respect and admiration of members."

"A legend"

Carlton Douglass, a fellow mortician, described Mr. Wilson as "a legend ... one of the most innovative funeral directors."

He told of the days when the deceased served families from modern funeral homes he operated on Orleans St., in East Baltimore, on Brantley Ave., in West Baltimore, and finally in Glen Burnie.

Douglass and others praised Mr. Wilson for giving free service to families unable to bury lowed ones.

Some 23 Baltimore and Washington area morticians were in attendance. Among them, a lifelong friend, Herbert Harris, who came from D.C.

He related humorous stories of their early business ventures as cab drivers when Baltimore streets were cobblestones. He called his friend a "brilliant man, a perfectionist, and one who shared with others his knowledge about how to make money."

The pastor, Rev. Williams, and five other ministers joined in tributes to Mr. Wilson.

They related incidences to illustrate that "Brother Elroy's life set an example for all of us. He was a good friend, an astute businessman, who still kept the common touch."

Other ministers who joined in the tributes were the Reverands James H. Smith, St. Luke Methodist; Julius S. Ford, Magothy Methodist; Leon White, Asbury Methodist-Broadneck; William Peters, Unity Methodist Baltimore and Apostolic Bishop James Stencil, who also sang a musical tribute, "It is Well."

Banker

Further testimony to Mr. Wilson's business acumen was given by Dr. W.O. Bryson Jr., president of Advance Federal Savings and Loan Association.

He said Mr. Wilson had given dedicated service to the board as a director, treasurer of the association and member of the executive committee up until last October, establishing a record of attendance better than younger members.

He called his death a "great loss" to the association which valued his wisdom and advice.

Other Advance Federal board members present to serve as honarary pallbearers were Joseph A. Bush, W. Emerson Brown Jr. and Theodore E. Brown Sr.

Also serving as honorary pallbearers were members of the Funeral Directors and Morticians Association of Maryland, headed by Joseph G. Locks III.

Music for the service was by the church choir, with Hampton Hines at the organ. John Taylor was Barbara Queen.

53 cars

Relatives and friends occupied 53 cars for the trip to nearby Cedar Hill Cemetery for burial.

Friends noted that Mr. Wilson purchased lots there a year ago after his doctor advised against a vacation trip abroad.

Born in Crisfield on Maryland's Eastern Shore on Sept. 12, 1894, Elroy Wilson was the son of Mary and Taylor Wilson.

He attended the city's schools, was graduated from the old Morgan College and Eckels School of Embalming.

He enjoyed boating and was founder and past commodore of the Neptune Yacht Club of Annapolis. He was a life member of the NAACP.

Mr. Wilson is survived by his wife of 47 years, Lillian Thomas Wilson, a retired Baltimore teacher; two daughters by a previous marriage, Lucy Gallardo and Leslie Harrison, both of Baltimore.

Also four grandchildren, Eric Harrison, of Boston, Tamara Pepera, of Las Vegas, Robert Harrison and Twilah Wiggins, both of Baltimore; and six great grandchildren.

Wealthy man

Cuff notes: Some speakers described Mr. Wilson as "stubborn" but allowed that in his persistent ways he was "right most of the time and we loved him for it."

When Elroy Wilson purchased the stately home he and his wife occupied at 6301 Ritchie Highway in the 1920s, it had been standing for 100 years. He modernized it and turned it into a warm, welcome place, even moving it back from the highway.

The Elroy Wilson Funeral Homes also were noted for their beauty and conveniences.

The busy locations were at 2004 Orleans St. in East Baltimore, nd 100 Brantley Ave. in West Baltimore.

There is no record of Elroy Wilson giving his prescription for long life. But friends attest he was an early riser, never shunned work and even in the year before his death kept busy attending to his real estate.

One speaker noted he liked people but was not much for parties, although he thrived on fishing and enjoyed boat trips.

More cuff: Elroy Wilson, at one time, had extensive real estate holdings. In recent years, however, he had liquidated many of them.

It is true that Elroy O. Wilson was not only rich in love for his fellow man, that he gave richly to many deserving families. He is believed to have been one of the wealthiest men in Baltimore.

REMAINED ACTIVE — Elroy O. Wilson, pioneer Baltimore mortician and businessman, dead this week at the age of 88, was active until two months ago. This photo, taken in October 1981 shows him cutting ribbon for Advance Federal's new Walbrook office. He served as Advance's treasurer and a director for over 20 years. Advance Federal president, Dr. W. O. Bryson Jr., is at left. Directors, Theodore E. Brown Sr., and W. Emerson Brown Jr., are extreme left and right. See more in If You Ask Me.

YACHTSMEN PALLBEARERS — Fellow morticians and members of Neptune Yacht Club, founded by Elroy O. Wilson, carry remains from church. Clockwise, Wallace Hall, Jerome Clark, Clifton Rush, Herbert Harris and Louis Hill, both of D.C., James Bevans and John Lockett. Carlton Douglass, mortician friend, has back to camera.

WILSON FAMILY — Mrs. Lillian T. Wilson, widow of businessman and mortician, Elroy O. Wilson, center, front, leaves John Wesley Methodist Church, Glen Burnie, following Tuesday rites. Daughter, Mrs. Leslie Harrison, right, and mortician Joseph H. Brown Jr., at left. In rear, daughter, Mrs. Lucy Gallardo and Mrs. Wilson's sister, Hilda Thomas; Granddaughters, Trilah Wiggins, and her brother, Eric Harrison, Chicago.

Addie G. Pleasants

WASHINGTON

Six ministers participated in the funeral services for Mrs. Addie Belle Greene Pleasants, Monday, at Simpson-Hamlin United Methodist Church where Mrs. Pleasant held several offices including chairmanship of the church's finance committee.

Mrs. Pleasants 74, widow of the late Rev. David D. Pleasants, who had been minister at the Old Simpson U.M. Church before its merger with Hamline eight years ago, died on Wednesday, Jan. 5, after lingering illness.

Interment was in Lincoln Memorial Cemetery.

The Rev. Kelly Lee Jackson, who is a former pastor at Simpson, ulogized Mrs. Pleasants, a retired school teacher, as on who come to the "end of the recess." He lauded "Addie as a woman with a wonderful spirit, a keen sense of humor, and one who was able to overcome the depressive spirit which sometimes overcomes us."

He also paid tribute to Mrs. Pleasants as a person who was always "helping others or seeking to help others."

Rev. Walter Zabel praises Mrs. Pleasants as a minister's wife who shared her husband's leadership although standing in the background.

The Board of Directors of
Advance Federal Savings and Loan Association
notes the profound sorrow
the passing on Jan. 8, 1983
of
Elroy O. Wilson
Fellow Board Member, Treasurer, and Member of the Executive Committee since 1960.

ELROY O. WILSON
(1894-1983)

Advance Federal Savings and Loan
Board of Directors
Dr. W. O. Bryson Jr., Chairman

Theodore E. Brown Sr.
W. Emerson Brown Jr.
Zelma A. Brown
Joseph A. Bush
Dr. Theodore D. Phifer
Dr. Robert M Phillips
Dr. Beryl W. Williams
Rev. Marcus G. Wood

We are sad to note the passing of fellow mortician
Elroy O. Wilson
Herbert and Vivian Nutter
and sons,
Ernest Terry Nutter,
Marshall Terry Nutter
Nutter Funeral Home
3035-37 W. North Ave.

In God We Trust
In memory of the late
Elroy O. Wilson
Thank God for how you paved the way in your funeral profession
Leroy O. Dyett & Sons Funeral Home & Staff

The Funeral Directors and Morticians' Association of Md. Inc.
regrets the passing of
Elroy O. Wilson
Pioneer Baltimore Mortician
Joseph G. Locks 3rd, President
Doretha Hector, Secretary

We regret the passing of our lifelong and former employer
Elroy O. Wilson
Brown-Thompson, P.A.
Funeral Directors
(Successor to Isaiah L. Brown and Son, P.A.)
Serving Baltimore for over 3 generations
Joseph H. Brown Jr.
LaMont Thompson
1913 W. Baltimore St.
945-1200
367-0474
298-0500

If you ask me

By Bettye Moss

Hats off

Salute of the week to 10 - year - old DaJuana Wordlaw, first place winner in the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. essay contest at Hillendale Elementary in Baltimore County.

Her thoughtful composition won the top award in the grade 5 intermediate category.

Here are excerpts from DaJuana's essay:

"If only all black people could hold hands with all white people . . . Dr. King's dream could come true.

" . . . Just imagine a sunflower seed growing in a bed of roses. The sunflower grows with the roses in peace. They're all beautiful and they're all flowers.

"Dr. King's dream was a bed of roses and each of us is a flower. All we need for peace is Heaven's sunshine so that we all can flourish.

"On Saturday evening, friends toasted the couple at a surprise party hosted by Lois Green, Olivia Clark and Agnes Reaves, at the latter's home.

The newlyweds will be at home in Bel Air after Feb. 1.

More love

Two Baltimore city educators, well known for their musical talents, were married December 31, at Union Baptist Church.

The Rev. Baxter L. Matthews, pastor emeritus, officiated at the ceremony uniting Rebecca Sydnor and Clarence E. Henderson.

She is the spinto soprano (lyric and dramatic), whose voice can be heard at Union, as well as any number of musical events. She is also the voice teacher at Dunbar Community Center.

Mr. Henderson (his intimates call him "Punchie"), is vice principal at Patterson High School.

He is the former minister of music at Madison Ave Presbyterian Church, where he guided the choir in presenting some unusual programs.

The New Year's eve wedding was witnessed by family and close friends. The bridegroom's son, Bruce, was best man. The bride's sister - in - law, Kim Dobson Sydnor, stood with her.

Mr. Henderson's mother, Mrs. Helen Ford, was here from N.Y.

The newlyweds plan a reception later this winter and a honeymoon cruise this summer. They're at home on Alto Rd., in northwest Baltimore.

Sick list

Get well cards to Greater Baltimore Medical Center will cheer Mrs. Vivian Nutter, the mortician. She had eye surgery on Wednesday.

And cheer, please, to Provident Hospital for Norman V. A. Reeves, the 5th District City Councilman.

He has been confined since last Wednesday, underwent surgery this week.

Best wishes to him and his family.

Sykes update

William G. Sykes and his wife, Delores, were back in Baltimore late Tuesday from what they called "a delightful" visit to Columbus, Ohio.

LOVED PEOPLE — Miss Anita R. Williams as she looked in 1961 when she received AFRO Honor Roll citation. See If You Ask Me for details about her death this week at the age of 91.

"The people are just grand and they made us feel so welcome — we could tell we are going to like it . ."

Mr. Sykes, you'll recall, resigned his $42,000 post here in our town as special assistant to Gov. Harry Hughes to take a $60,000 - plus post as a member of the cabinet of Ohio's new governor, Richard Celeste.

He'll be Secretary of Administrative Services.

The new guv was sworn in over the weekend, and so was Sykes.

Sykes' press conference was recorded on all local media, and he and Delores had plenty of warm welcomes from fellow cabinet members and natives at the ball and other events. Cuff note: Members of the Columbus chapter of Epicureans — that national women's group, showered their fellow member, Mrs. Sykes, with welcome gifts and flowers.

Another Ohioan they met with Baltimore ties was Lewis Smoot — he's chief executive officer of the black owned Sherman R. Smoot Contractors. His was one of the firms which built Social Security Metro West in downtown Baltimore.

Cuff note: Sykes officially assumes his Ohio post on January 31.

Adult grads

The Saturday morning audience at the University of Maryland's Center for Adult Education in College Park was attentive and serious.

Absent were the catcalls and outbursts you've come to expect at some college graduations.

Maybe the reason is that all of the several hundred grads were adults already at work in the market place.

They found the time to return to college — while still working — and earn their undergrad and graduate degrees.

Officially, the occasion was the mid - year commencement of what is known as University College, located on the College Park campus.

President John Toll and Chancellor T. Benjamin Massey commended the grads on their achievements.

Army men

Honorary degree winners: Gen. John W. Vessey Jr., chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and senior military advisor to President Reagan; and Dr. W. Edwards Deming statistical consultant to industries and foreign governments.

Witnessing his first graduation as the university's first black chancellor of the entire College Park campus was Dr. John Brooks Slaughter.

Also seen in the audience, Retired U. S. Army General Arthur J. Gregg, who in black. When he was on active duty, in the Pentagon, Gen. Gregg was deputy chief of logistics on the staff of Gen. Vessey, mentioned above.

Also there, Gen. Gregg's wife, Charlene, a counselor, in the Arlington schools. Their daughter, Sandra, is a reporter for a D.C. daily.

Cuff note: — In retirement, Gen. Gregg keeps active as president of a consulting firm, based in Fairfield, Virginia.

Also spied in the crowd, Dr. Emmett L. Fleming, an attorney, who is on the U. of M. faculty.

Among grads

Among grads receiving master's degrees in general administration was Audrey Sheffield Baker.

A substantial number of black grads received bachelor's degrees.

Among those seen in the line of march: Floudia M. Bradley, George Lee Banks, Ollie J. Coe, Margaret Ann Butler, Stanley Byrd, Ivory Douglass Clark Jr., Ophelia Burnette Custis, E. Patricia Coleman;

Also, William Tyrone Bullock, T. Audrey Stokes, Margaret Allen Forbes, Victoria A. Simmons, Harold J. Slaughter Jr., Earl Williams Jr., Lisbert L. Williams, Patricia Williams.

And, George Edward Pope 3rd, Robert Wayne Ratcliffe, Carl Reginald Greene, Pamela Joyce Glover, Paulette Yvonne Hammond, R. Johnson Harris, Johnnie Lee Harvey Jr., Joseph Edward Hawkins Jr., and Catherine G. Marshall.

"Miss Anita"

Nobody called Anita Rose Williams by her first name. She was "Miss Anita" or "Miss Williams," to young and old.

The death of Miss Anita, the age of 91, recalls many fond memories for family and associates.

First of all, she was a genteel lady who was not into making hasty judgments. She gave thought to problems presented her, and usually came up with a suggestion which proved helpful.

Before her retirement in 1961, she had to her credit 40 years as a social worker in Baltimore city — beginning as a case worker with the St. Vincent de Paul Society in 1922.

AFRO files are full of stories about "Miss Anita" — how she became head of the Bureau of Catholic Charities, where she rendered dedicated service for four decades.

Our newspaper files recount her contributions to her native Baltimore, as a board member on numerous agencies — Provident Hospital, the old Barrett School for Girls, the Council of Social Agencies.

More importantly, "Miss Anita" received flowers while she could enjoy them.

Awards were numerous — an honorary degree from Loyola College, The Papal Cross from Pope Pius XII, the AFRO Honor Roll Award in 1961, the Business and Professional Women's Sojourner Truth Award in 1980 to name a few.

"Miss Anita" kept her spark of interest in people even when advanced age dictated her move to the Stella Maris Hospice. In her eighties, she was active as a member of the institution's governing board and was a great source of inspiration to fellow senior citizens, as well as younger workers and visitors.

ILL — City Councilman Norman V.A. Reeves, ill in hospital.

644 George St.

Cuff note: Miss Williams was the daughter of Samuel F. Williams and Mary Brown Williams.

The family lived for three generations at 644 George St., in west Baltimore, where Miss Anita grew up.

Father Williams built the house.

It was a sturdy and comfortable structure, often a meeting place to solve neighborhood and community problems, with "Miss Anita" presiding.

The home was torn down to make way for the George Murphy Homes.

Baltimore city is a better place because Miss Anita Williams, lived, loved and helped people. She was a grand lady.

Survivors: Her sister, Mrs. Sarah Hattie Howard; niece whom she reared, Mrs. Genevieve W. Mason (Mrs. Casaisus), (who recalled how this AFRO reporter first advised "Miss Anita" of her upcoming marriage and how she was glad we did because family plans were for her to continue a career before changing her name.)

Area Obituaries

Lowell Clark

Funeral services for Lowell R. Clark were Jan. 10 at New Metropolitan Baptist Church, Mosher and McCulloh St.

Mr. Clark died Jan. 5. He had been a member of New Metropolitan Baptist Church for more than 35 years and was the president of the Lawyer L. Swin Baptist Church for more than 35 years.

He was born in Smithfield, Va. on Oct. 23, 1895 and was the son of Julia and Holland Clark of Smithfield, Va. He attended school Richmond County, Va.

Mr. Clark was in the Army and was honorably discharged in 1919. He was employed as a dining car waiter for the B and O Railroad for more than 30 years before retiring 15 years ago. He was also a member of the American Legion Post No. 14 in East Baltimore for four years.

He is survived by one sister Madeline Clark Foreman of California.

James Wright

Funeral services for James H. Blackwell Wright were held Jan. 8 at United House of Prayer For All People.

Mr. Wright died Jan. 5. He was born May 23, 1920 in Franklin, Va. and was the son of William Blackwell and Minnie Blackwell Wright. He moved to Baltimore in 1927 and attended city public schools.

Mr. Wright joined the United House of Prayer For All People in 1932.

He was a member of the Senior Shout Band, organist for the Senior Choir and served on the Deacon Board. He is survived by his wife, three daughters, three sons, 11 grandchildren, mother, two brothers.

Mary Moore

Funeral services for Mrs. Mary Moore were held Jan. 10 at New Hope Baptist Church.

Mrs. Moore died Jan. 7. She was born July 4, 1912 in Roanoke, Va., and was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Fields. She was a member of Jerusalem Baptist Church. After moving to Baltimore in 1926 she joined New Hope Baptist Church.

She was an active member of the Missionary Board, Pastor's Aide and other church organizations.

Mrs. Moore is survived by her husband Chesley L. Moore.

Wilbert Franklin

Funeral services for Wilbert Franklin were held Jan. 11 at New Trinity Church.

Mr. Franklin died Jan. 7. He was the son of John Thompson and Nancy Thompson Holmes. Relatives said Mr. Franklin was a good father and husband and was always there to help when needed.

He is survived by his wife, Betty Franklin; two daughters, Deborah and Cathy Franklin; two sons, Tyrone and Wilbert Jr., one grandson, Tyrone Franklin Jr., mother, Nancy Thompson Holmes; two sisters, Esther Barber and Brenda Franklin; one adopted sister, Novette Carter; two brothers, Roy L. Thompson and Nathan Thompson.

Robert Wallace

Funeral services for Robert Arthur Wallace were held Jan. 8 at St. Peter Claver Church.

Mr. Wallace was born June 29, 1927 and was the son of Fairfield Wallace and Viola Wallace [illegible] 1968.

He attend city public schools and was honorably discharged from the Army after serving in World War 11.

He is survived by his stepfather Jerome Williams; wife, Delores Wallace; brothers John Wallace and Pearl Chatmon.

Neil Glover

Funeral services for Neil Edward Glover were held Jan. 7 at Charles A. Rice Funeral Home.

Mr. Glover died Jan. 3. He was born Aug. 21, 1979. He was the son of Mary E. White and Neil Glover.

He is survived by his mother, Mary E. White; father, Neil Glover; one sister, one brother, grandmothers.

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Dr. Robert T. Ford, Deacon
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Sunday,
January 16, 1983
Eight
and
Eleven O'Clock
Marion C. Bascom
Preaching

8:00 —
The Lord Is My Light
— Allison
Where Shall I Go?
— Work, arr.
11:00 —
Seek Ye the Lord
— Roberts
Let Us Cheer the Weary Traveller
— Dett

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