



## BETHEL VERNON SMITH

March 27, 1942 - May 14, 2020

### Obituary

Bethel Vernon Smith was born on March 27, 1942 in Memphis, Tennessee. He was the third child born to Elcue and Marguerite Smith. Two siblings preceded him in death. His early childhood years were spent in Boxtown, a suburb of Memphis. It was here that he accepted Christ as his savior, coming from the mourner's bench at an early age at White's Chapel A.M.E.

After the death of his mother, Bethel moved to St. Louis, Missouri in 1954. There he lived with his mother's eldest brother, Reverend Alfred Milam. He joined St. James A.M.E. in 1955, actively participating in the Junior Usher Board and St. James Youth Choir. He attended Riddick Grade School and graduated from Sumner High School in 1961. He attended Harris Junior College for a year before deciding to serve his country in the United States Navy.

Bethel spent a total of 4 years in the Navy. He was first stationed as a medical

lab technician at the Air Force Hospital in the Philippines, then later served aboard the USS Hancock AirCRAFT Carrier during the Vietnam War. When he returned home to St. Louis, Bethel met the love of his life, Delores Finley, and they were married in 1968. She preceded him in death in 2013 after 45 blessed years together.

Bethel and Delores expanded their family with the birth of their son Brian Keith in 1968, and Wendell Christopher in 1972. After his military career, Smitty, as Bethel was also called, worked for the Missouri Pacific (Union Pacific) Railroad. He was transferred from St. Louis to several locations, such as Little Rock, Arkansas, Big Spring, Texas, Kansas City, Kansas, Omaha, Nebraska, and finally back to Kansas City, Kansas. He enjoyed his career and held multiple positions while there, retiring as a manager of mechanical maintenance after 32 years of service.

In between his duties at home and work, Bethel truly valued church. While in Big Spring, he made a strong impression on his new church family at Baker's Chapel A.M.E. He loved to recount how after two week's time, he was made head trustee. No doubt, they recognized his strong work ethic and love of service. With every move, Bethel continued to be an active member in his church. At Ward's Chapel A.M.E. he sang in the Senior Choir, the Men's Choir, was a member of the hospitality board, and of the trustee board. His church family fondly called him Mr. Esquire in honor of his sharp appearance and his willingness to participate in the church fashion shows.

Bethel showed the same love and dedication to his family. He was an integral part of continuing the legacy of the Milam Family Reunion, started 65 years ago after the passing of his mother. He played many roles in the family, lovingly known as Dad, Grandpa, B.V., Uncle Bethel, and Smitty. He showed a true example of manhood, caring for Delores in her latter years after a lengthy illness. After a life well-lived, Bethel departed this Earth on May 14, 2020.

He leaves to cherish his memory: two loving sons, Brian and Wendell, grandchildren, Ashleigh D. Smith, Jermaine T. Smith, Alexis N. Smith, Cobe B. Smith, three great granddaughters, Jayla N. Smith, Aolani Groage, Kalleena Smith, one great grandson, Lazayden Smith and brothers Richard L. Milam and Jesse B. Morris. He was preceded in death by his brother, Tilmon Smith and sister, Carolyn J. Mitchell. He is also survived by a host of loving nieces, nephews, cousins, family, and friends. This great man will be sorely missed.

Services will be held next Fri, May 29, 2020 at 1 pm at Lawrence A. Jones and Sons Linwood Chapel. Visitation 12:00 P.M. - 1:00 P.M. Interment Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. St Louis MO June 2, 2020 at 10:15 am.

To send flowers  
to the family or plant a tree  
in memory of BETHEL VERNON SMITH, please visit our floral store.

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# Tribute Wall

RS

“ *Structured design in red and white was purchased for the family of BETHEL VERNON SMITH by Ray and Clara Savage. Send Flowers With Our Deepest Heartfelt Sympathy. Rest In Peace and GOD'S Loving Arms. With Our Love, Ray and Clara Savage*

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**Ray and Clara Savage** - May 25, 2023 at 02:49 PM

PG

“ *It was my pleasure to serve as Bro. Smith's Pastor at Ward Chapel/Cain-Grant A.M.E. Church from 2015-2019. I found him to be a dedicated worker in whatever capacity he was in. He never seemed to say no. We sang beside each other with the Ward Ambassadors Men's Chorus and I enjoyed hearing him sing with the Sanctuary Choir. His deep voice carried the bass section and will be missed. Mr. Bethel's work with our Trustees will be missed sorely. So many projects were completed by him just taking the initiative and making sure it was done and looked good. He was a blessing to me and to the people who met him. RIH. - Rev. Dr. V. Gordon Glenn III*

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**Pastor Gordon Glenn** - May 26, 2020 at 11:35 AM