



Edwin Douglas Charles, Sr.

April 29, 1933 - March 15, 2018

Obituary

Edwin Douglas “Ed” Charles, Sr. began his life’s journey in Daytona Beach, Florida on April 29, 1933.

Edwin was born at a time when rights and opportunities for people of color were limited due to Jim Crow. Though many obstacles were present for him as a young boy, he set out to soar above them all. His courage and resiliency were just the start of his inspiring life. While attending Gibbs High School in St. Petersburg, Florida, he was a two-sport athlete and a member of The Class A Football Championship Team. He was offered football scholarships to Florida A&M and Bethune Cookman College. But baseball was his choice, and in 1952 he began his professional baseball career with the Boston Braves. Before settling comfortably into baseball, he was drafted into the United States Army, serving a year and a half in Germany with an Honorable Discharge.

Upon returning to professional baseball, he still had to endure hatred and bigotry. While playing in the South he dealt with racial taunting and insults. Often having to eat and sleep alone on the team bus, while his white teammates dined at restaurants and stayed at segregated hotels. Despite the harsh treatment, he did not lose sight and continued to play well.

His tenacity landed him a spot with The Kansas City A's where he played six seasons before being traded to The New York Mets in 1967. While in New York, he was nicknamed "The Glider" due to his smooth-fielding defense. The Mets have had many 3rd basemen, but one who's fondly admired by fans is Ed Charles. Also known as "The Poet Laureate of Baseball," he wrote poems of motivation to uplift his teammates that resulted in the team going deep into the playoffs. His veteran guidance and charismatic persona helped lead to a victory as the team won their first World Series in 1969, which concluded Ed's baseball career. He said, "I was very fortunate, I got to go out as a champ".

Following his retirement, Ed became the New York Metro Area Promotion Director for Buddah Records, where he was awarded a Gold Record for promoting the popular hit "Ooh Child" by the Five Star Steps. He also started his own baseball novelty furniture business, designing unique pieces of furniture that replicated baseball equipment. He later returned to the New York Mets organization, but this time as the Midwest Scouting Supervisor and Coach for the Rookie League teams. He was an active participant in the Mets fantasy camps, where he continued his legacy in coaching and interacting with fans.

Ed was a man who always involved himself with the community. His play on the field may have been buzz worthy, but his influence in the community was a bigger story. While with the Kansas City A's, he started the "YMCA Ed Charles League" to get young boys off the streets and offer them personal guidance, while learning the rules and fundamentals of baseball. In 1987 he accepted a position with the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice Liaison to the "Board of Education" where he worked with at-risk youth in the Bronx. There he put in long shifts, providing crisis intervention for troubled youth; attempting to steer them away from a life of crime, drugs and alcohol. Ed was very passionate about youth development and while at Juvenile Justice helped launch "Youth Options Unlimited". This program assisted the youth with

mentoring and offered encouragement to help them to believe in themselves.

Ed made a significant impact on the lives of his sons. In their early years they spent quality time together, going to shoot pool, amusement parks, bowling and trips to Florida beaches. He especially enjoyed eating Gates BBQ with his oldest son, Eric, who he affectionately called "Boo Boo". Family and friends were Ed's love and joy. He was an active participant in his family reunions (Driskell-Charles & Georgia Pine Society). His presence was always welcomed with excitement as his warm smile, and generosity made everyone feel important. For several years, Ed was the primary caregiver for his cousin, Sarah Lou Johnson, who he said, "gave him the opportunity to love and care for as he would have done for his mom in her elder years".

Perhaps, some of Ed's greatest achievements were having his childhood story played out in the movie "42", The Jackie Robinson Story and his poems published in the New York Times, Kansas City Star, Newsday, St. Petersburg Times, and Dell Publications.

Ed was met at Heaven's gate by his mother, Eddie Lee Driskell Charles, his father, Raymond Charles, eldest brothers, Wilbur Charles and Johnny Charles, youngest brother, Ronald Charles, eldest sisters, Annie Laura Charles and Mary Charles and younger sister, Verna Charles Ford (Donald).

Edwin Douglas "Ed" Charles, Sr. leaves to cherish his memory: two sons, Eric D. Charles and Edwin D. Charles, Jr. (Tomika) both of Kansas City; long time love, Lavonnie Brinkley of New York City; ex-wife, Betty Charles of Kansas City; one brother, Elder Charlie Charles (Mildred) of Daytona Beach; one sister, Virginia Charles of St. Petersburg; two sisters in-law, Vivian Charles of Miami, and Dolores Brinkley of New York City; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

Funeral Service for Edwin Douglas “Ed” Charles, Sr. will be held Saturday, March 24, 1:00 p.m. at Mt. Vernon Missionary Baptist Church, 3935 Prospect Ave.

Visitation will be from 11:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. at the Church.

Interment, Leavenworth National Cemetery.

To send flowers
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in memory of Edwin Douglas Charles, Sr., please visit our floral store.

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Tribute Wall

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“ Dear Family, What a great guy! Seems as though we just meet yesterday, but it was about 1972! My son Joey and I speak of him so often. Always remembering the time Ed visited the school where Joe was in the 2nd. grade. What a treat for the children, as well as the teacher. Ed was willing to give his time. Loved seeing 42. That explained why Ed was so special. He loved the game! You are in my thoughts today and always.

David Pessen - March 24, 2018 at 03:41 PM