



Deacon Ernest R. Riley

July 6, 1932 - July 4, 2025

Ernest Robert Riley, a spiritual and devoted family man, military veteran, entrepreneur, and community pillar, was born on July 6, 1932, in Kansas City, Kansas, to the late Marie Watson and R.C. Riley. He passed away peacefully, leaving behind a legacy of love, service, and tradition.

Ernest grew up with his three brothers—William McNeal, Albert W. Tolliver, and Lloyd C. Tolliver—all of whom preceded him in death. He graduated from Sumner High School in 1948 and remained actively involved with his alumni community, proudly serving as Treasurer of the Class of 1951.

He was drafted into the U.S. Army and served honorably during the Korean War at Fort Riley, where he worked in the medic unit and reached the rank of Corporal before receiving an honorable discharge.

In 1966, Ernest became engaged to the love of his life, Iola, and they married in 1967. Their union formed a loving family: Ernest had four children—Candace Lett, Rose Preuitt (Gregory), Kelvin Robert Riley, and Edmund Carl Riley (Zelodia). He lovingly adopted Iola's daughter, Ramona "Moe" Riley-Bozier (Jeff), when she was just three years old. Together, they welcomed a son, Anthony Robert Riley Sr., and embraced Paul Jordan (Florescia) as a son—a promise Ernest made to his mother to care for him.

A man of both discipline and flair, Ernest was known for always keeping a

crisp \$100 bill tucked in his wallet—an early life lesson passed down from his grandfather, who had taught him always to keep money in his pocket. This tradition, which lasted from his teens into his 30s, reflected his self-sufficiency and quiet pride. Another unique signature: he wore black every Friday, a personal tradition he began in his 20s and honored for the rest of his life.

A man of both discipline and flair, Ernest was taught by his grandfather the importance of always keeping money in his pocket—a lesson he carried throughout his life. A unique personal signature, he began wearing black every Friday in his 20s, a tradition he honored for the rest of his life.

Ernest was entrepreneurial and ambitious. He owned and operated a moving company, often working alongside his sons, and also managed a janitorial business. Later, he became a licensed travel agent. He had a deep love for travel and proudly visited nearly every U.S. state. One of his most cherished travel memories was attending the 1984 Summer Olympics, held in Los Angeles, California—a dream come true for this lifelong sports enthusiast.

He was a dedicated Kansas City Chiefs fan, holding season tickets for over 30 years, and enjoyed watching a wide range of sports.

A longtime member of Emmanuel Church, Ernest was ordained as a Deacon on March 5, 2006. He faithfully served as a church greeter alongside Ms. Ava White, with whom he shared a special bond as they welcomed church members and guests. His unwavering faith shaped the way he lived, served, and led his family.

In the community, Ernest served as a Boy Scout Leader, helping to mentor boys into strong, responsible men. On April 13, 1968, he was inducted into the Prince Hall Masons – Green Pasture Lodge #128. He was also a proud member of Club Sans Pareil, a civic club committed to supporting students

through scholarships.

Ernest enjoyed dancing—a passion that earned him nicknames like “Jitter” and “James Brown” for the unforgettable moves he displayed on the dance floor. His joyful spirit, sense of rhythm, and love for life were infectious.

Professionally, Ernest dedicated over 25 years of service to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), following earlier roles with the General Services Administration (GSA) and the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Ernest is survived by his devoted wife, Iola, of 58½ years, with whom he shared a love for the Lord, traveling, watching sports, and antique collecting. He leaves to cherish his memory six children: Candance, Rose, Kelvin, Edmund, Ramona (Moe), and Anthony (Tony); fourteen grandchildren; and over twenty-five great-grandchildren. He is also remembered by a loving extended family, including sisters-in-law Evelyn, Margie, Virginia, and Zenobia, and is preceded in death by sisters-in-law Arlene, Wyonna, and Ardella. He is also preceded in death by his brothers-in-law, Jonathan and William, and survived by Wesley and a cherished bond with his brother-in-law, Fred. He also leaves behind numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and a beloved nephew, Edward, and friends.

Ernest Robert Riley lived with intention, walked in faith, and loved with his whole heart. He will be remembered for his strength, wisdom, wit, and the deep, lasting connections he forged across generations.

Funeral Services will be held on Friday, July 11, at 11:00am at Emmanuel Church. Interment Mt. Moriah Cemetery. Visitation from 10:00am-11:00am at the church. Services conducted by Lawrence A. Jones & Sons Funeral

Chapel. Condolences may be shared on our website.

Cemetery Details

Mount Moriah Cemetery

10507 Holmes Road
Kansas City, MO 64131

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 11. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Emmanuel Church
920 Olive Street
Kansas City , MO 64127

Funeral Service

JUL 11. 11:00 AM (CT)

Emmanuel Church
920 Olive Street
Kansas City , MO 64127

Tribute Wall

KR

“ *Prayers and Condolences to You and Family. Sister Irene ARMSTER Richest and Family.*

Katherine I Armster - Richest - July 14, 2025 at 08:41 PM

SM

“ *Iola, my dear friend and Classmate of Central High School. I express my sincere condolences regarding the passing of your husband Ernest. He was a wonderful supporting person. I enjoyed conversations with him at our every meeting.*

I know he is missed, but GOD had a higher calling for him and I know he is enjoying his new life with the Lord. You stay strong, and call me anytime you need to talk or need anything.

*Your dear Friend
Sidney McCarther*



Sidney McCarther - July 11, 2025 at 05:47 AM

PW

“ To Sister lola Riley & Family, I just this evening learned of your husband's passing. We extend our sincere condolences, love and prayers during this time. We know that earth has no sorrow that Heaven cannot heal.

We are so grateful and blessed to have been able to witness your union and how the two of you stayed right by each other's side.

May the Lord continue to strengthen, comfort and encourage you now and in the days to come. The angels are rejoicing for this one who has gone on home.

Pastor Cassandra Wainright
Heaven Sent Outreach Ministries

Pastor Cassandra Wainright - July 10, 2025 at 11:07 PM

DH

“ Deacon Riley. I will miss hearing you say to me on Sunday " GOD BLESS YOU YOUNG MAN! " My condolences to the RILEY/WILEY FAMILY. GOD BLESS YOU ALWAYS! HEAVEN CHANGES EVERYTHING! IN THE MIGHTY AND MAJESTIC NAME OF JESUS! AMEN!

Delbert Hughes - July 10, 2025 at 10:13 PM

TS

Praying for sister Riley and family. Deacon Riley will truly be missed!! I will miss hearing his voice on Sunday mornings. Love you family!! 🙏🙏

Theresa Slaughter - July 11, 2025 at 07:20 AM

LL

“ My sincere condolences to the family. Praying for your comfort and strength during this difficult time.



Lataysheia Lance - July 10, 2025 at 05:22 PM

NH

“ NaTasha Horton purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Deacon Ernest R. Riley.



NaTasha Horton - July 09, 2025 at 11:22 AM

NH

“ NaTasha Horton planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mr. Ernest Riley.

NaTasha Horton - July 09, 2025 at 11:22 AM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Deacon Ernest R. Riley.



July 09, 2025 at 10:41 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Mr. Ernest Riley.

July 09, 2025 at 10:41 AM