



## DEACON OSCAR GENE RUSSELL

November 30, 1943 - June 26, 2020

### The Obituary

Oscar Gene Russell was the oldest son of the late Birdell Russell born on November 30, 1943 in Alexander City, Alabama, Tallapoosa County. Oscar, mostly known by family as Gene, was raised by his grandparents, the Late Radford and Lula Young. He professed Christ at an early age at Friendship Baptist Church in Alexander City, Alabama and was raised on strong Christian values. He received his formal education in Alexander City public schools and graduated from Laurel High in 1963. Soon after, he joined the Armed Forces US Army where he had an opportunity to serve in Europe, Asia and Germany as a tank driver and sharpshooter. Upon his honorary discharge he moved to Detroit, Michigan in 1967 and was employed at Chrysler. He first resided with his great aunt Annie B. Smith in Highland Park, MI.

Oscar Gene was a man of God and it was important that he found a church home. In his quest to stimulate his spiritual growth and faith in Christ, he joined Williams Chapel Missionary Baptist Church under the leadership of Rev. Welton Williams. Sharing God's gospel in song was his passion. He had a gift of singing in first tenor. Therefore, it was inevitable that he would be an active member of the male chorus. He later was ordained as a Deacon. He was a member of Williams Chapel for over 30 years. At the time of his death, he was an active member at Macedonia Baptist Church where he served on the deacon board and sang in the male chorus. Throughout his years in church, he served various ministries including Sunday school, transportation, and furthermore served Communion to the community and sick and shut in. He was a member of several singing groups including the Mighty Price Singers and the United Voices in Christ and had the opportunity to travel the country and share his beautiful voice with others.

As the scripture says, "A man who finds a wife, finds a good thing". And Oscar knew in high school in Alexander City, he had found his future wife. So, after she graduated from college, he married his high school sweetheart, Virginia Ann Oliver also of Alexander City. She later accompanied him to Detroit, Michigan where they have lived for over 51 years.

God blessed this union with one child, Volita Shree Russell. Thankfully, they were able to celebrate their golden anniversary last year among family and friends a gift from their daughter.

If Oscar wasn't singing for the Lord, he was doing his second most favorite thing, driving! He retired from SMART transportation after 20 plus years of service. One of his most honorable jobs was being the professional driver and bodyguard for the late Queen of Soul, Aretha Franklin. Additionally, he also drove for several private companies. One of the reasons Oscar loved to drive was because he enjoyed traveling the country. He preferred to drive rather than fly no matter the distance. Some of his professional travel opportunities included driving NBA teams in town to play the Detroit Pistons; Winter Olympics in Utah, Million Man March, Presidential Inaugurations, many religious functions, conferences, and Pan-Hellenic, Masonic and civic organizational events.

Family was of utmost importance to Oscar. Therein, he was one of the founding members of the Russell, Young and Smith Family Reunion in the early 70s. The reunion has grown over the years and he made a point to try to attend all reunions. He hosted many reunions in the city of Detroit. The highlight of the summer would be when he had the opportunity to spend it with the family members from Buffalo, NY, Alabama, Chicago, IL, California, and Florida, just to name a few. Gene, as the family affectionately called him, was known as the family historian. He knew all the history and everybody. We would jokingly say, if you were from Alabama, he probably knew you or your family.

Oscar Gene Russell succumbed to cancer on Friday, June 26, 2020. He leaves to cherish his lovely wife of 51 plus years, Virginia Ann Russell and daughter, Volita Shree Russell; only remaining living sibling, youngest brother, Steve Phillips; only remaining aunt, Fannie Thomas; 2 sister in laws, Annie Ruth Corbin and Emma Jean Bynum, brother in law, Bobby Oliver, 13 nieces: Bernadette, Diana Theresa, and Veronica Benson, Stephanie Phillips, Marla Willis, Emma Corbin, Carolyn Robbins, Regina Stevens, Cheryl Oliver, Mashunda Oliver, Tina Olive Spencer, and Mershira Oliver; 6 nephews: Michael Phillips, Brandon Phillips, Wendell Cates, Jessie Corbin, Ronnie Oliver, and Emez Oliver; his Goddaughter Alonnis Franklin, and a host of cousins, great nieces and nephews.

Oscar was preceded in death by his mother, grandparents, sister, Clementine Benson, brothers, Lester and James Phillips, and nephew, Anthony Benson.



# Cemetery

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## GREAT LAKES NATIONAL CEMETERY

MI,

# Events

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**JUL Visitation 04:00PM - 06:00PM**

**5**

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Clora Funeral Home (Detroit West)  
18957 West Warren Ave, Detroit, MI, US,  
48228

**JUL Family Hour 10:00AM**

**6**

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MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH  
14221 SOUTHFIELD FWY., DETROIT, MI,  
US

**JUL CELEBRATION OF LIFE SERVICE 11:00AM**

**6**

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MACEDONIA BAPTIST CHURCH  
14221 SOUTHFIELD FWY., DETROIT, MI,  
US

# Comments

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“ Jean was a big part of our family. When he was born my mom, his Aunt Fannie used to baby sit him. She baby sat with him so much he thought she was his mother. She loved Jean and always has him in her thoughts. He always kept her in his thoughts and visited her. He will be missed. RIH

**Joann Polk Fannie Thomas** - July 06 at 03:16 PM



“ Cousin Oscar Gene was a huge presence in our family. He was a leader in our family reunions, visit often, and was a huge loving person. He was always at family events and knew what was going on with many families. He will truly be missed! He will never be forgotten.

**Frances Thomas-Bowers** - July 07 at 09:19 AM



“ My sincere condolences from the Ross and Washington family.

**Paulette Ross Washington** - July 06 at 01:18 PM



“ Oscar & I spent a lot of time together at both HFHS CAM & on the many bus trips to Battle Creek.

His spirit was always high and he was always a pleasure to know and to be in his company.

May God Bless Him and his Family.

JOHN R. EDDINGS

**JOHN R. EDDINGS** - July 05 at 08:52 AM



“ To the Family of Deacon Russell, I was so deeply saddened to have heard of the passing of your Beloved Husband, Father and Friend. I always enjoyed when the Men Choir would come to Jackson and sing. Now Deacon Russell, has fought a good fight, and his soul has been set free from the pain and troubles of this world. As you gather together not to say "Good-bye", but to rejoice and celebrate a life well lived, know that Deacon Russell is Resting in Paradise with Jesus. May the Lord give you strength during this time. Until you all shall meet again in Glory, hold on to those Precious Memories how they will linger in your Hearts forever.

Blessings and Prayers for each of you.



Sister Teresa Gibson, Jackson MI - July 04 at 04:13 PM

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“ Our hearts are with you today. We pray that you find comfort in knowing that others feel your pain in the loss of your husband, father, uncle, cousin, and friend. He was a great supporter of the Retirees of SMART. We will surely miss him. Our prayers and thoughts are with you.  
With Love, Blessing and Prayers Always,  
Charlene Fane

Charlene Fane - July 04 at 10:33 AM

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“ 10 files added to the album Memories Album



Clora Funeral Home - July 04 at 09:39 AM

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“ Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant was purchased for the family of DEACON OSCAR GENE RUSSELL.



June 30 at 08:19 PM

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“ Words cannot express my sadness. May the comfort of God help you through this difficult time. From Cousin Frances Thomas-Bowers

**FRANCES THOMAS BOWERS** - June 30 at 05:21 PM

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“ Carlyon”Neccie” Oliver Robbins lit a candle in memory of DEACON OSCAR GENE RUSSELL



**Carlyon”Neccie” Oliver Robbins** - June 29 at 10:43 PM