



Mr. John H. Lee

January 22, 1934 - December 19, 2014

The Obituary

“I play the notes as they are written, but it is God who makes the music.”

~Johann Sebastian Bach

John Horace Lee was born on January 22, 1934 to the late Gilbert Bernard Lee, Sr. and Nydia Allen Lee. He was the youngest of seven children; four of whom preceded him in death (Gilbert, Beverly, Douglas, Delores). John transitioned from this life December 19, 2014 surrounded by family and loved ones.

Early on in life, John seemed destined for greatness in the realm of music because he started playing the piano by ear at the ripe age of six. Inspired by his mother and sister who both played piano, John took lessons from two local musicians Mrs. Elizabeth Moore and Mrs. Florence Edwards.

John accepted the Lord as his Savior at the age of seven and joined Mt. Nebo Baptist Church of West Point, Va. Throughout their childhood, John and his siblings were very active in the church. The church had a major influence in his life and he later went on to become Minister of Music for Mt. Nebo and served in that capacity for over 50 years.

John graduated from the Beverly Allen High School, named in memory of his paternal grandparents Beverly and Alice Allen, who were strong promoters of education in the town of West Point. While attending Beverly Allen, John used his piano talents to play for many upperclassmen concerts and school events. After graduating from high school, he went on to receive his BS degree in

Music from the then Virginia State College (University). While an undergraduate at VSC, John's alma mater, Beverly Allen School, was closed due to segregation. John came back home and began teaching the African-American students during the summer months. This undertaking was short-lived because John was not a licensed teacher nor did the authorities want a successful African-American educational program in West Point.

John appeared on "Stars of Tomorrow" Talent Program and was one of the accompanists for the college choir concerts during his educational years at VSC. Being the advocate for education that he is, he then went on to study at Columbia University and became the first African American from West Point to receive a degree from an Ivy League School. John received his MA in Music Education from Columbia as well and received a certificate in Secondary School Administration from the College of William and Mary.

In 1956, John started teaching at Central High School in King & Queen Virginia. Early in his teaching career, he was drafted and served his country as a PFC in the Army for two years. Upon completing his duty and receiving an honorable discharge, John briefly taught in Pennsylvania at the Downingtown Industrial Institute. Even though he was away from Central, John left such a major impression on them that, then principal and mentor to John, Mr. Gordon Robinson called him to return to Central High School.

Returning to Central, Mr. Lee, as his students continue to call him, began right away in building and growing the music program. Mr. Lee spent countless hours in school and out to ensure that his students received the best education and experiences. Under his direction, Central High School produced countless amounts of award winning performances and programs for the community to enjoy. Later in his career at Central, Mr. Lee became assistant, then acting Principal. Mr. Lee served Central High School for 40 years before his retirement.

It may seem that John was busy enough teaching and maintaining a high school, but that was just a piece of the big picture. John also became an adjunct faculty instructor for the music department of Virginia Union University.

John believed in utilizing his talents and that showed as he was musician for the Mt. Nebo Baptist Church Choirs, the West Point Community Choir, the Baptist General Convention, the James City Training School Alumni, the “Celebration Choir” of Second Baptist Church of Richmond, VA for their Easter Sunrise Service and many other churches and organizations.

John was in such high demand that he was a member of the American Guild of Organist, the National Educators Association, Virginia Retired Teachers Association, VSU Alumni Association, NAACP, Hampton University Choral Guild, Arts Alive and Phi Delta Kappa International amongst many other organizations. John also received numerous awards and certificates throughout his impressive musical career.

John took pride in the choirs of Mt. Nebo especially in preparation for the Homecoming Mass Choir. His favorite hymn was “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” and favorite scripture was the 27th Psalm. His favorite motto was “If I can help somebody...” John was a God- fearing man and loved to serve his church and community.

Aside from a rigorous music career, John lived a highly active life. He loved to take walks in the morning around town and meeting up with his tennis buddies to get a match or two in at West Point High School. John also had a unique bowling style which came naturally from his “lefty hook.” When missing from around town, John could be found running the ping pong table at his brother Ralph’s house taking on any and all challengers. John was an advocate of family and history. He was instrumental in organizing family reunions and “family fun days” because he felt that family is one of the most important structures of life. The biggest role that John filled in his personal life was the Best Uncle to his nieces, nephews, great nieces, great nephews as well as community children. He did anything and everything in his power to help them succeed and have fulfilling lives. John had a sense of humor and quick wit that could not be matched.

He is survived by a devoted and lifelong companion of 50 years, Ms.

Constance D. Brown of Richmond, VA; one loving sister, Mrs. Alice L. Reid of West Point, VA; one loyal brother, Dr. Ralph N. Lee of Newport News, VA; two sisters-in-law, Theola Lee of Philadelphia, PA and Marinda Brown of Richmond, VA; eight nieces, Irene Wellington(Steve) of W. Sacramento, CA, Cheryl Lee of Philadelphia, PA, Dr. Maria Lee-Johnson(William), Angela Lee and Mia Dillingham(Jay) each of Newport News, VA, Linda White of West Point, VA, Maya Boston of Baltimore, MD and Maria Boston of Williamsburg, VA; ten nephews, Cleveland Lee of Philadelphia, PA, Beverly Lee, Jr. of Braddock, PA, Bernard Lee Esq.(Kathy) of Philadelphia, PA, William Lee(Linda) of Newport News, VA, Dr. Timothy Lee(Dr. Melissa), who is also his godson, of Suffolk, VA, Dr. Benjamin Lee(Dr. Nikki) of Martinsville, VA, Dr. Philip Bradley(Thasia) of West Point, VA, Dr. José Boston, Juan Boston and Wayne Stokes(Dr. LaVern) each of Baltimore, MD; a special cousin, Joe Boston of Baltimore, MD; devoted and close family members, Robin White, Brian Jamison, Lanelle Jamison, Leanne and Allen White; a Godson, Reginald Bassette II; and a host of other relatives and friends.

Homegoing services for Mr. John Lee will be 11 a.m. Saturday December 27, 2014 Our Lady of The Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, 3570 King William Avenue, West Point, VA. 23181. A public visitation will take place at the Mt. Nebo Baptist Church of West Point, VA Friday December 26, 2014 from 4pm-6pm with the family present to receive friends from 6pm-8pm for a formal visitation. Professional Services Entrusted to Vincent Funeral Home, Inc.

Tribute Wall

LB

“ I am so saddened to hear of the loss of Mr. John Lee! Mr. Lee was my supervisor and mentor during my Student Teaching experience at Central High School. His leadership, guidance and advice was extremely instrumental in my success with the students as well as inspiring and shaping of my musical career that has followed. Without question, Mr. Lee made a significant contribution to who I am today and, for that, I will be eternally grateful. I am so sorry that I cannot attend the funeral service today, but I hope the family, friends, fellow musicians and associates will please accept my heartfelt condolences and tribute to a Great Man!

Sincerely, With My Love!

Larry Bland

Larry J. Bland - December 27, 2014 at 09:18 AM

RJ

“ *To the Family of Mr. John Horace Lee,*

The 1959 class of King and Queen Central High School expresses condolences to you at the passing of Mr. Lee. He was a strict, serious, deeply dedicated, carrying, and no nonsense teacher and educator who exemplified quality. Mr. Lee always encouraged and stretched us to perform at a high level. His unique style and tactics were such that we knew Mr. Lee expected high quality performance whether on stage, in the classroom, in the halls, around campus, on school trips, or in the community. We thank God for our teacher and friend, Mr. John Horace Lee. His legacy will live on in our hearts. As you move forward, may the love of God our father, Jesus, The Christ strength you, comfort you, and give you peace.

The 1959 class of King and Queen Central High School

Roberta Pollard Jones - December 26, 2014 at 11:14 PM



Deborah
Pryor

“ *As National President of The Drifters, Incorporated and on behalf of our membership, I am sending our condolences to Drifter Constance Brown and the Lee family. Please know that our hearts are with you as you gather to say goodbye to Driftwood John Lee. We thank Driftwood John for his many years of participation in Drifter events and for serving as the musician for the Drifter Choir during our annual conventions. Driftwood John had a warm smile and a gentle spirit that touched many of us and we value his 34 years of contributions to the Richmond Chapter and The Drifters, Incorporated. We love you and we will miss you.*

*Deborah Pryor
National President
The Drifters, Incorporated*

Deborah Pryor - December 26, 2014 at 08:31 PM

VC

“ Virginia Cooke purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Mr. John H. Lee.



Virginia Cooke - December 25, 2014 at 11:20 AM

LJ

“ Leonard and Cassell Jones purchased the With Sympathy Tazo Tea Basket for the family of Mr. John H. Lee.



Leonard and Cassell Jones - December 23, 2014 at 09:12 PM



“ Mrs. Fields Nibblers® Sympathy Basket was purchased for the family of Mr. John H. Lee.



December 23, 2014 at 09:08 PM

 Olga Chavez

“ *Mr Lee was the best music teacher in the 80's when I was in high school. I remember him telling me to open my mouth to sing. He said he could hear me at the other end of the hall when we was changing classes, but when I got in he class I acted like I couldn't open my mouth. He was fun and a great person. God has a beautiful new flower for his garden. R.I.P Mr. Lee.
Much Love Olga Pendleton Chavez.*



Olga Chavez - December 23, 2014 at 08:17 PM

LJ

“ *Mr Lee meant so much to me and my Family, I will hold on to all the wonderful memories of him forever rest in Paradise dear friend*

Loretta Jackson - December 23, 2014 at 05:45 PM

MC

“ *John was a true friend and musical master of many instruments. He played for many events and didn't turn down his friends. Our blessings and prayers go out to his family and we pray as you think of his precious memories they will bring you ROSES IN DECEMBER! In Christian Love, Marianna and Bob Chestnutt*

marianna chestnutt - December 23, 2014 at 04:31 PM

CW

“ *Mr. Lee was a blessing to my entire family from my grandmother to my mother to my little sister and even to me. I appreciate his positive spirit and I pray that he will watch over us all as we go through this journey called life. You will truly be missed Mr. Lee. I will continue to keep your family and the entire community in my prayers because you have touched all of our hearts at some point in time. We love you more than you'll ever know!*

Cherelle Washington - December 23, 2014 at 09:24 AM

NA

“ *Mr. Lee was a wonderful teacher and i learned do much from him he will be missed. Nancy Gibson class of 1986*

nancy gibson acree - December 23, 2014 at 09:21 AM

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nancy gibson acree - December 23, 2014 at 09:21 AM

ST

“ *My heart goes out to the family, friends, students and community. Mr. Lee has impacted so many lives. God has truly pick one of the best to rest. Well done my good and faithful servant! ! Well done Mr. Lee your soul well be missed.*

Sharon Taliaferro - December 23, 2014 at 09:07 AM

RI

“ *Mr. Lee ment a lot introduce me to music and hundreds more, was very serious about his music and that sure made me same way. Mr. Lee cared about his students and Loved King&Queen Central High Schools, and Community Love U RIP.... Richard Billups, Jr.*

RichardBillups - December 23, 2014 at 09:02 AM

DD

“ *There are not enough words to express the profound impact that Mr Lee had on the lives of countless individuals over his lifetime. As a student, Mr Lee introduced me to a world of wonders through my participation on the award-winning King & Queen Central High School choir. From the classics, to spirituals, to contemporary music he caused us to stretch beyond our dreams and reach heights of excellence none of us ever imagined. Our choir was the absolute finest because of Mr. Lee. He Always anticipated our weaknesses and planned for us to be the very best!! And we were!! I know in my heart that there was a beautiful grand piano with the finest ivory keys waiting for Mr Lee and a choir of angels poised and ready for his direction when he entered the heavenly gates and heard the words in perfect harmony say "well done, my good and faithful servant, well done". -Dr Joy Lawson Davis, CHS Class of '71.*

Dr. Joy Lawson Davis - December 23, 2014 at 07:29 AM

 Judy Carlton

“ *I have many fond memories of Mr. Lee, peace to all of his loved ones.*

Judy Carlton - December 23, 2014 at 06:03 AM

K1

Greatly saddened by Mr Lee's passing, but greatly honored to have been one of his students.

Kurt Keene (CHS class of 1978) - December 23, 2014 at 06:54 AM

CA

Mr. Lee was a very inspirational teacher. He will be truly missed.

cashona - December 23, 2014 at 07:13 AM

DO

*John enriched the lives of all who knew him.
Donald O'Connor*

Donald O'Connor - December 23, 2014 at 08:08 AM

SC

*Mr. Lee will be truly missed I had the pleasure of him teaching me music and also work with him through the summer when he was the Asst. Principal and I am glad to have known such a great person, educator and musician you will be truly missed.
Sherri Clark*

Sherri Clark - December 23, 2014 at 10:28 AM

CJ

A true gentleman has been called home. His many talents and the expectations for excellence in our music will be missed. May God comfort the family.

Cassell Jones - December 23, 2014 at 08:52 PM

VC

Mr. Lee not only impacted my life in school but also several years after graduation. Even though I had not seen him in several years after graduation, when we called him to ask him to play at my wedding he did not hesitate to accept. He was a great man and will be greatly missed by many!

Veronica Byrd Crudup - December 23, 2014 at 11:14 PM