



Earnest Eugene Earls

October 3, 1933 - May 14, 2016

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God. – Matthew 5:9(KJV)

Earnest Eugene “Gene” Earls, Sr. began his earthly journey October 3, 1933. He was the fifth of eleven children born to the late Reno & Jessie Mae Goudelock Earls (married June 25, 1926) in Dahlonega, Lumpkin County, Georgia. His siblings are listed in birth order: Lee, Evelyn, Robert, Joseph, Frank, Johnnie, Anna, Floyd, Ella Mae, and Donald Earls.

The Call to Serve His Country

Earls, like many men in his generation, left cotton fields behind to enlist in the military. He is a Veteran of the United States Air Force serving during the Korean Conflict earning the National Defense Service Medal. After leaving the military, he returned to Georgia and attended Blayton Business College and Midway Radio and Television Technical Institute of Georgia, both in Atlanta. In 1958, he met the love of his life, Catherine “Kitty” Juanita Buffington. After getting her parents’ (John & Essie Buffington) blessing, they were married on July 17, 1958 at St. Paul United Methodist Church in the Pastor’s parsonage by Rev. F. J. Hunter.

The Call to Public Service

In 1963, Earnest made a footprint in history, along with Royce Stephens, by joining the Gainesville Police Department as its first two Black officers. A career in public service was born. During his tenure with GPD, Earls had a number of achievements. In 1965, he took a second job with the U.S. Postal Service becoming the first black postal worker in Gainesville. (Fighting crime didn’t pay all that well in those days). He let the post office job go after a time and refocused on his law enforcement career. He became a member of the Riot Squad, Civil Defense Light Duty Rescue, then on to Chief of the Crime Prevention Unit – Juvenile Division. He took courses at the University of Georgia and secured certifications in Community Relations, graduated from the Police Academy, earning P.O.S.T. certification as well as securing certification in fingerprint classification. He attended Law Enforcement Officers Training School at the Department of Justice – Federal Bureau of Investigation and was promoted to the rank of Detective Sergeant. In 1973, he received a Certificate of Commendation from the American Legion and was

named

Officer of the Year. He left GPD in 1974, moving to the Hall County Sheriff's Department. During his tenure, he was named Special Advisor to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation on a murder case. He accepted an offer to join the police department at Lake Lanier Islands Authority in 1979 and opened E&E Electrical Repair Shop with Rafe Ellison (former GPD fellow officer). In 1987, he began work at the State Department of Corrections at Lee Arrendale Correctional Institute in Alto, Georgia. His retirement in 2000 culminated 37 years of dedicated career service in law enforcement.

A Call to Serve God and Family

Earnest and Catherine had three children: Lisa, Eugene & Charles. Together they instilled into each of these children a thirst for knowledge, career advancement, service, a respectful affection for the law, and the willingness to make themselves available to serve God.

Earnest was a lifelong member of Hickory Grove United Methodist Church where his parents also worshiped. He worked many Sundays but always made sure to leave an envelope to be picked up by Mr. Charlie B. Mays and later Mrs. Ethel Lou Mays on Saturdays

for the church. Gene and Kit (Gainesville's first African American Bookmobile Librarian), insisted all three of their children to go to college to pursue higher education and exposure to the larger

landscape. They wanted their children to position themselves in places where they could leave their own personal footprints in service. Both Eugene, Jr. and Charles secured full athletic scholarships in football and basketball, respectively. Eugene, Jr. also excelled in wrestling and track & field setting a state record. Charles was a starting member of the back-to-back Gainesville High State Championship team (1983, 1984). Lisa (lifelong college

student) getting her love of books and reading from her Mom - has three degrees and additional post graduate study.

Each became involved with stints in law and law enforcement for a time, but all have moved to other professions and entrepreneurships. All continue to work hard as Gene and Kitty modeled to their children – always bring the “E” game. “E” representing “Earls” and “excellence and the motivation to choose to outperform in whatever endeavor they chose to lend their time.

Earnest was known by most to be a tough, serious guy. He was exactly that - but he also had a love for laughter and blues music. He played electric guitar in the quiet of his home. He was a marksman, an avid checker player, a diehard Atlanta Braves fan, an excellent fisherman, strong swimmer, grill master, and he loved taking long drives and listening to the Bible on CD. He bought a boat when his children were young and took every opportunity he could to take them to the lake to drive the boat and fish until sunset. After

fishing, there was always chicken! He doted on his children and his children's children and loved being called, "Papa" by his grandbabies. Catherine was his single biggest motivator. He faced a lot of adversity both in and outside the department being a black police officer in

the 60s including death threats, being sent on false calls, shift commanders who didn't want him working on their watch, and having his home bombed with molotov cocktails. His daughter, Lisa, barely escaped injury in that attack. He was never actually given authority to arrest anyone not of color early on though he saw no race in criminal activity and performed his duties with fairness to all. In doing so, he earned respect across all races

making a way for other officers of color to follow in his footsteps – because he did not quit. There are many stories - too numerous to mention here - of people that he helped, officers he trained and partnered with over the course of his nearly four decade career. Yes, he was

tough, serious and meant exactly what he said, but he had a heart of gold. If you needed help, and he thought he could assist you then he certainly would give it a shot try. (bad law enforcement humor)

Earls' Last Call

Early Saturday morning (May 14, 2016), Earnest Earls answered the call he absolutely could not refuse. It was the call to come home. He told his children all last week that he was going home on Friday. The children thought he meant Gainesville, but he was certainly

speaking of much higher ground - not an earthly home. He went to sleep Friday night in the

natural and made it over to the other side. While most were surprised, his granddaughter, Asha, who lived with him for months as his caregiver had dreamed that he crossed over and knew he was doing just fine getting to see his beloved Catherine, mother, brothers, sisters and grandbaby again. In due season (if we faint not), we will see Earnest and Catherine again. We thank God for giving them to us for the time HE did and know HE is still God.

Preceding Earnest Eugene Earls in death in addition to his elders, grandparents, and parents, are Catherine "Kitty" Earls, his beloved wife (of 47 years when she made it over in

2005), granddaughter, Chelsea Danielle Earls and seven siblings: Lee Earls, Evelyn Earls Browner, Robert Earls, Pastor Joseph C. Earls, Pastor Frank A. Earls, Johnnie Lewis Earls,

Pastor Anna Elene Earls Reid. He leaves to cherish his memory: three siblings, his 3 children, Lisa, Eugene & Charles, and 9 grandchildren: Asha K. Bolton, Ari A. Waller, Ezaunie Earls, Emekka Earls, Correy D. Earls, Eboni Mitchell, Cortnei Earls, Coy D. Earls,

Coby D. Earls.

Earnest also leaves a host of cousins, nieces, nephews, extended family and dear friends and colleagues in law enforcement and the U.S. Air Force across the globe.

Cemetery Details

Hickory Grove CME Church Cemetery

69 Hickory Grove Road
Dahlonega, AK 30533

Previous Events

Service

MAY 19. 11:30 AM (ET)

Hickory Grove CME Church
69 Hickory Grove Road
Dahlonega, GA 30533

Tribute Wall



“ *Earnest Eugene Earls*

October 22, 2023 at 04:48 PM



“ *To the Earls Family my condolences go out to you all.*



Barbara Davenport Billingslea - August 31, 2017 at 10:23 AM