



The Honorable Ralph A. Hunt, Sr.

April 10, 1932 - May 16, 2017

Ralph A. Hunt, Sr. was born in Oxford, North Carolina (Granville County) as the seventh of eight children owing to the union of the late Johnnie and Amanda Harris Hunt. He grew up in an area of the town known as “Grab-all.” He received his formal training and education in the public schools of Granville County, attending Orange Street Elementary and the more celebrated Mary Potter High School, from which he graduated in 1950. Ralph grew up during the period of both legal and forced segregation in the South and experienced many of the hardships and difficulties that were common to that era for persons of African descent in America. Nonetheless, he enjoyed a well-rounded upbringing and developed quiet aspirations that would later figure in his preeminent rise to success as a leader, outstanding citizen, and public servant. In fact, the early underpinnings for his leadership style would come from his membership in the Boy Scouts of America, which he joined during World War II. Upon leaving high school, he chose to further his education at Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, North Carolina, majoring in Mathematics and embracing Education as his minor subject area. However, before he could finish the full course of study, his educational career was cut short when the United States Army came calling via the draft in his junior year. That was 1953; and, he would serve the nation as a soldier during what was known at that time as “The Korean Conflict.” His service as a Corporal in the U.S. Army would take him overseas to Germany and bring him stateside to Bloomfield, New Jersey. Ralph ended his brief military career in

1955 with an Honorable Discharge and returned once again to Johnson C. Smith University to finish his degree, graduating in 1956 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics. With a college degree in hand, Ralph would move North to Newark, New Jersey seeking a better life and work that paid a decent wage. He arrived in Newark, and was soon after hired as a mathematician at Wright's Aircraft Company. This adventure would be short-lived, as Ralph grew increasingly homesick and disenchanted with Northern living. So, he returned gladly to his native Oxford in 1957 and found employment as a teacher at his Alma Mater, Mary Potter High School. He remembers his move back to Oxford during this time as "the best thing that ever happened to me." Why would he be so emphatic about that occurrence? Could it be that his move back to Oxford in that year also marked the time when he met the lovely Rebecca Cooke, who at the time of meeting was a sophomore at Winston-Salem State Teachers College (now Winston-Salem State University). While Ralph would serve as teacher, athletic director, and advisor to the Senior Class at Mary Potter during his tenure there from 1957 to 1964, and also serve the local community as chairman of the Granville County Citizens League, dealing with various civil rights issues, it was his budding and all-consuming relationship with the breathtaking Rebecca Cooke that would define his life for all times future, as she became the light in his life. In 1961, they would travel to Washington, D.C. and return with wedded bliss as Ralph and Rebecca Hunt.

In April of 1964, the first of the three Hunt siblings, Ralph Hunt, Jr. would be born and the couple would move to Washington, D.C. The move was designed to ensure exposure to culture and refinement for the child in his developmental years. Life for the Hunt family on the Washington scene would be brief. They both taught in the public schools of Washington, D.C. during the 1964-65 school year and then headed back to their Southern roots. This time, they landed in Durham, North Carolina. This decision would later prove to be strategic as it relates to Ralph's future service and career paths. Ralph took a job teaching Math at the famed Hillside High School in Durham, and Rebecca

taught for one year in Holly Springs, North Carolina. Ralph taught at Hillside from 1965-1968. During this time, the Hunt's second son, Reginald, was born in March of 1967. The year 1968 bore significance for two reasons, one was the birth of the Hunt's only daughter, Regina, in October of that year. The other significant note was that the premier black-owned and managed life insurance company in the nation, North Carolina Mutual, which was headquartered in Durham, hired Ralph as a computer programmer. He would work there until 1970. Upon leaving the employ of North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company, Ralph would become the Executive Director of the Durham Business and Professional Chain. He would hold sway there from 1970-1982. His involvement there would bring him squarely into the public arena and lead to other noteworthy service and achievements. Along the way, he would serve as a member of the Durham County Board of Social Services (1971-75), as a Scoutmaster with the Boy Scouts of America, and begin his illustrious political career. In 1975, he would achieve the first of these political milestones, as he was elected to the 13 member Durham City Council. He was one of only two African-Americans serving at that time. He served on the Council with Dr. C.E. Boulware, another long-time black elected official in Durham. Ralph represented Ward#3, a seat on the City Council which had been previously held by the legendary John S. "Shag" Stewart. His service on the City Council lasted until 1985. Ralph was known as a "consensus builder"—meaning he could always find a way to get people to come together because he was a consummate bridge-builder. In spite of being in the minority most of the time, he was appointed chairman of all standing committees at one time or another over the course of his tenure on the Council, and was chosen by his fellow Council members to serve as Mayor Pro Tempore during the term of Mayor Charles Markham. Another major stride in Ralph's political career came in 1985 when he was elected to the North Carolina General Assembly as a Senator, replacing Gary Hancock. During his tenure, Senator Hunt became a trusted colleague and leader in the State Senate. Among his

noteworthy achievements in the Senate was his sponsoring and introduction of a bill to avoid run-offs in contested primary elections in North Carolina from 50% +1 to 40%. This requirement had long defeated a good number of qualified black aspirants for political office. Amid blatant local opposition and turmoil, he introduced legislation in the General Assembly to merge the Durham City and County school systems. Senator Hunt also served at one point as the Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Majority Whip of the Senate, and a member of the Joint Legislative Commission on Government Operations. His Senate career was halted in 1993 by his appointment to the prestigious State Utilities Commission by then Governor James B. "Jim" Hunt. His Senate seat was then filled by the late Jeanne Hopkins Lucas. The Honorable Mr. Hunt served as a Commissioner from 1993-2001 where he served as Chairman of the Utilities Commission during his tenure. At the end of his term he "retired." This only lasted for awhile, because he was sought out once again by his admirers and the collective will of the people when he was asked to finish the remainder of the term of Senator Wilbur "Wib" Gulley upon his resignation from the State Senate as one of the representatives from Durham. This period of service lasted from 2004 to 2005. Although there was a public clamoring and outcry for Senator Hunt to continue to represent the people of Durham and parts of another county, he chose not to seek the position, choosing instead to draw closer to home and enjoy the company of his cherished family, viz., his beloved wife Rebecca; son, Ralph Hunt, Jr. and wife, Anita; son, Reginald Hunt and wife, Krista; daughter, Regina Greene and husband Keith. Add to the mix, six beautiful grandchildren, Ralph Hunt, III, Lauren Hunt, Nijel Hunt, Ryan Hunt, Sydney Greene and Tyler Greene. He also has one surviving sibling; Talmadge Hunt of Norfolk, Virginia. Among his deceased siblings are: Mildred Ellerbe, Bernice Clement, John Hunt, Wilma Hunt Taylor, Ivory Hunt Marrow of Newark, New Jersey, and Joyce Hunt Shepard. After a nine year absence from politics, Senator Hunt stepped back in the political realm and served as chairman of the Durham Committee on the Affairs of Black People from 2014-16. While amassing such notable

achievements as previously mentioned, the Honorable Mr. Hunt also obtained a Real Estate Broker's License, a Master's degree in Mathematics Education from North Carolina Central University, and became a licensed auctioneer. Moreover, he became a private business owner in 1982, opening convenience stores in Durham and Oxford. Of interesting note is the fact that Mr. Hunt purchased the very store in Oxford, North Carolina where he had been mistreated as a child and referred to by unflattering racial names. Senator Hunt is a member of Sigma Pi Phi and the Durham Graduate Chapter of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. He was named the "Kappa Man of The Year" for 1977-78 and a three-time recipient of the State's highest honor, the "Order Of The Long Leaf Pine." The Honorable Ralph A. Hunt, Sr. is best known by his friends, family, and colleagues as a man of great wisdom and influence, a gentle and kind manner, a quiet strength, and unquestioned honor and integrity.

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 22. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (ET)

Woodlawn Memorial Park

2107 Liberty St

Durham, NC 27703

<http://www.burialplanning.com/cemeteries/woodlawn-memorial-park-4/>

Service

MAY 22. 1:00 PM (ET)

Woodlawn Memorial Park

2107 Liberty St

Durham, NC 27703

<http://www.burialplanning.com/cemeteries/woodlawn-memorial-park-4/>

Tribute Wall



“ *The Honorable Ralph A. Hunt, Sr.*

October 05, 2023 at 11:31 AM



“ *I was saddened to learn of the passing of my high school math teacher. But delighted to reconnect with him last year at my high school class reunion and to exchange hugs and laughter. Rebecca you and the children are in our thoughts and prayers.*

*Love,
Carolyn R. Ingram*

Carolyn Ingram - May 24, 2017 at 08:58 AM



“ *1 file added to the album New Album Name*

Stephen T Gheen - May 22, 2017 at 09:08 PM

“ Our Prayer for the Ralph Alexander Hunt, Sr. Family May 22, 2017

Loving Lord and Heavenly King, you can count the stars and call them all by name. Your power is absolute. Your understanding is beyond comprehension. You support the humble. You comfort those who mourn. We declare that those grieving the death of our beloved, "Uncle Ralph," husband to our dear and most loyal Aunt Rebecca, father to Ralph, Jr. Reginald and Regina, and grandfather to Ralph, III, Lauren, Syndey, Nigel, Ryan and Tyler, with your knowing, We pray that their mourning will turn into dancing. We want to lift up all that were gathered today and those that were there in mind and not in body, that are going through much grief at this time and are finding it so difficult to come to terms with all that has taken place in the past few days.

We humbly ask that You would come to us all and provide the comfort needed to come to terms with all that has happened- and the strength to face the reality that things will never be as they were.

Lord, We know that the grief of the Hunt Family seems to be overwhelming them and we are hurting for them, and know not what to do to help- and so we are coming to You in prayer, to ask that You will meet each of them at their point of need and help them to turn to You and each other at this sad time.

We pray that as this day passes and with each and every sunrise and sunset that follows, Your healing touch will comfort, support and be with them in this time of distress and may this be a thing that causes each of them to draw closer to You, knowing that You alone can heal the broken-hearted and bring joy out of pain.

Thank you Lord for always being there for us, and into Your hands we place each of those dear ones who have such sadness in their hearts - We KNOW in whom we believe and are confident that You will bring good out of this situation, as You so graciously do- and to You be all the praise and glory. In the name of Your precious and

living Son, Jesus Christ Our Lord, we pray, Amen and AMEN.

Revelations 21:1-7

Rossa Pugh-Ward - May 22, 2017 at 08:18 PM

BR

“ *Too the family of Ralph Hunt o I was a student of Mr Hunt and he was a great person to me as a teacher, he will be truly miss . we send our condolences to you the family with God speed. I will cherish him memory always. Bob Robinson and Cheryl Henderson Gee FAMILYS*

Bob Robinson - May 22, 2017 at 01:56 PM

GG

“ *Durham and the State of North Carolina has lost a giant of a legend! Senator Hunt was a family person, christian, and a no non sense individual when it came to business of any sort. Most of all, Senator Hunt was a champion of the people and for that we are grateful for his leadership roles. As the days go forward, our community will continue to lift Mrs. Hunt and the entire family in prayer!
With God's grace,
Geoffrey E. Gadsden & Family*

Geoffrey Eugene Gadsden - May 22, 2017 at 11:39 AM

CC

“ *Chairman Omar S. Beasley Durham Committee purchased the Treasured Lilies Spray for the family of The Honorable Ralph A. Hunt, Sr..*



Chairman Omar S. Beasley Durham Committee - May 22, 2017 at 09:03 AM

TG

“ My condolences and prayers to Mrs. Elvira, Ralph Jr., Regina and Reginald. May God be with all ya'll during this time of this wonderful man. I remember when I was younger and Mr. Hunt Sr. ran the store on Pilot street. Your husband, and father was such a wonderful man and has touch so many people in life. I will continue to pray for your family.

Love always
Tara, Doug, Alisha and De'Mar

Tara Glasper - May 22, 2017 at 07:53 AM

DC

“ My sincere condolences go out to the Hunt family. Mr. Hunt was a highly influential mentor and an even greater leader. His legacy will continue to be exemplary for leaders to come.
Dr. Carlous Caple

Dr. Caple - May 21, 2017 at 07:00 PM

CH

“ We will truly miss this legend and hero. Our prayers are with his loved ones.
MR. & MRS. CHARLES HUNT

CHARLES HUNT - May 21, 2017 at 06:08 PM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of The Honorable Ralph A. Hunt, Sr..



May 21, 2017 at 05:34 PM

WJ

“ To The Hunt Family. Words cannot express the emotions that you all must be going through at this time. My prayers and most sincere thoughts are with you all at this time; I am sorry I couldn't make it there from Kansas City for the service. But as the grief settles, I hope you each will be able to celebrate and cherish the special citizen that Mr. Hunt was: Father, Mentor, Teacher, Husband, Businessman, Leader, Friend.

I will never forget growing up with you all and the strong and kind influence Mr Hunt had on me. While the influence growing up was well known.....you cannot imagine How Much his support of me behind the scenes with the legislature meant for me when I worked in State Government. I can only say Thank You for all that he did for me.

*God Bless you each!
William Lawrence Jr.*

William Lawrence Jr. - May 21, 2017 at 03:32 PM

RR

I concur with M Lawrence Jr.

Robert L (Bob) Robinson - May 22, 2017 at 01:25 PM

WJ

“ Walter A. Jackson purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of The Honorable Ralph A. Hunt, Sr..



Walter A. Jackson - May 21, 2017 at 03:21 PM

TM

“ To Rebecca and Family, Our heartfelt sympathy in the loss of your loved one. May precious memories you have last a lifetime. You are in our thoughts and prayers. Jamie and Edith Brodie Burwell, Youngville, N.C. and William and Julia Burwell McCargo, Ocala, Fla.

THE McCargos - May 21, 2017 at 02:56 PM

LL

“ My condolences, thoughts, and prayers to the Hunt family. Cherish the memories and may you find comfort and peace in God.



Lori Lawrence - May 21, 2017 at 01:26 PM

TF

“ The Wilkins Family purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of The Honorable Ralph A. Hunt, Sr..



The Wilkins Family - May 21, 2017 at 11:42 AM

JJ

“ It was with much sadness when I learned of the passing of my High School Math Teacher and family friend. I have many fond memories of Ralph.
Rebecca and Family, you have my deepest sympathy.



Janet Jones - May 21, 2017 at 09:34 AM

WT

“ My sincere condolences to the Hunt Family during this most difficult time. Please know that the Hillside High School Drama Department and the Tabb Family shares in the loss of Mr. Ralph Hunt, Sr. I will never forget you all inviting me to your home on several occasions. Mr. Hunt continued to give me great advise as I matriculated through the teaching profession. Hillside High School Drama Department is where it is today because of Mr. Ralph Hunt, Sr. and his amazing family. We will greatly miss Mr. Hunt, but he will live in our Hearts forever.

-----Hillside High School Drama Department. Wendell Tabb, Director

Wendell Tabb - May 20, 2017 at 12:31 PM

DR

“ My name is Diane Desmond Robinson from Crystal Lake, IL. Ralph and Rebecca were dear friends to my big brother and late sister-in-law, Mary and Terry Desmond. While I did meet both Ralph and Rebecca on one occasion, I really got to know them from Terry and Mary.

Terry and Mary shared the best stories over the years about their special friendship with Ralph and Rebecca. As impressive as Ralph's political career was, their times together rarely focused on politics. It was all about their families. Even though Ralph, Rebecca, Terry and Mary spent most of their time talking about their children and grandchildren, they covered their siblings, nieces, nephews, and their departed family members, too. While there was a lot of laughter, they felt a mutual empathy.

Rest in eternal peace, Ralph, knowing that you made a big difference in so many lives. I am blessed to have met you and your beautiful bride and grateful for the bright light you were to Terry and Mary.

Diane Desmond Robinson - May 20, 2017 at 09:00 AM

BP

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends. 🙏
Larry & Brenda Pollard

Brenda Pollard - May 19, 2017 at 11:29 PM

SB

“ Mr. Hunt was a genuine, honest and brilliant man with a very kind soul. He was a very interesting person with a well thought out perspective on the community history, culture and current events. He was a great asset to the Durham Community and across the State of North Carolina in addition to serving our country ~ with his keen intellect and his passion that people be treated with respect and dignity. His legacy will continue through his work as once said: *May the work I've done speak for me.*”
I will surely miss running into him and Mrs. Hunt out shopping.

Sandra Battle - May 18, 2017 at 05:56 PM