



Mr. William A. Marsh, Jr.

January 31, 1927 - November 19, 2018

William A. Marsh, Jr. was a Durham native and life long citizen. He is the son of the late Mrs. Christine Alston and the late William A. Marsh. Born on Carrol Street in Durham's West End on January 31, 1927, he loved his community. This community produced luminaries including the Fitzgerald family, the Rev. Pauli Murray and Ben Ruffin among others, not least of whom is the Durham lawyer affectionately known as "Billy". Attorney Marsh matriculated through Lyon Park Elementary and the Hillside High School class of 1944. He attended Hampton Institute (now Hampton University) in Hampton, Virginia for just a short while before being drafted into the US Army in 1944 where he served in Germany during WW II. He returned after the war to Durham and entered North Carolina College, now North Carolina Central University and was awarded his B.S. He then entered law school as one of the early plaintiffs to desegregate the law school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1949. After the most inhospitable treatment in that environment, Attorney Marsh entered the law school at NCC, receiving his LLM in 1953. He passed the bar exam which was administered orally and began his legal career which spanned a period of 60 years. He used his legal skills to advance Durham's movement for civil rights. Marsh was central to the school desegregation lawsuit proceedings when African-American families who had submitted 225 requests for reassignment to white schools in Durham and had only eight of these approved for the 1959-60 school year, turned to litigation. He represented students charged with trespassing during a sit-in at the

segregated Royal Ice Cream parlor here in Durham in 1957; this event preceded the now famous Greensboro sit-ins at Woolworths. This event is marked by a NC state historical marker here in Durham at the corner of Dowd and Roxboro street, then site of the ice cream parlor.

Attorney Marsh was a true pioneer and achieved several “firsts” during his career. He was the first black chairman of the Durham County Board of Elections and North Carolina’s first black county elections chairman in 1972. He later served as the first black chairman of the state Board of Elections. He was the first black NC state bar councilor in 1986. His work for the defense of civil rights has been recognized by the North Carolina Bar Association, and in 1999 Marsh was inducted into the National Bar Association Hall of Fame, which “honors those lawyers who have been licensed to practice for 40 years or more and who have made significant contributions to the cause of justice.” Marsh served as the General Counsel for the African Methodist Episcopal Church for many years and was elected as well as President of the Judicial Council. At the time of his death, he was the denomination's Special Counsel. He served as General Counsel to Mechanics and Farmers Bank for over 40 years. Additionally, he was General Counsel to Mutual Community Savings Bank, SSB, UDI Community Development Corporation and focused his practice on the business associations, estates and property and personal injury. His specialties included banking, commercial , civil rights, constitutional and voting rights law. He was among the first African Americans in 1968 to join the North Carolina Bar Association which had been segregated. In addition to being a member of the American Bar Association for over 50 years, Billy was also named to the North Carolina Bar Association Hall of Fame. He is a founding member of the North Carolina Association of Black lawyers and the local Durham contingent, the George H. White Bar. In 1982, he was awarded “Lawyer of the Year” by the NC Association of Black Lawyers by its then President, Hon. G.K. Butterfield. He served in numerous leadership capacities, including, first African American President of the 14th Judicial

District Bar and Durham County Bar Association, Life member and past President of the NCCU Alumni Association and Basileus of the Beta Phi Chapter of Omega Psi Fraternity. He is a life member of the NAACP and was twice the recipient of the local chapter's Freedom Fund banquet award in 1988 and again in 2009.

Attorney Marsh is a long time mason of the Orient of North Carolina, AASRPHA, past President of the Commanders of the The Rite Orient of North Carolina (33rd degree Masons) Doric Masonic Lodge #28, Shriners (ZAFATemple #176); 33rd degree Mason- United Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Prince Hall Affiliation for the Southern Jurisdiction of the USA; C-Hudson Chapter #63 Holy Royal Arch Mason, PHA; Durham Consistory #218. As a veteran of WW II, he is also a member of the Weaver-McLean Post 175 American Legion. Attorney Marsh is a past Deputy of the United Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction of USA and honored as Sovereign Grand Inspector General (SGIG).

Attorney Marsh served on several Community Boards including the John Avery Boys Club (Now Boys and Girls Club) and Scarborough and Hargett Funeral Home.

Billy is a long member of St. Joseph AME Church and in the late 1950's served as superintendent of the Sunday School. He was member of the Steward Board for over 40 years, a member for over 70 years and taught the Berean Bible class for over 33 years.

In addition to excellent representation of clients for compensation , Billy donated countless hours of pro bono publico services to needy individuals and community groups. His legal assistance to community groups, relative to economic development greatly enhanced the economic health of literally

thousands of citizens , assisting them to make productive contributions to society. A sole practitioner for much of his career, Billy formed a partnership with William F.Banks to become Marsh & Banks, Attorneys. After the passing of his partner in 1987, Billy mentored many lawyers including Robert and John Perry who later formed Perry, Perry & Perry, Floyd Brown, and in 1993 a partnership with his son, William A. (Drew) Marsh III which lasted for 14 years until Drew was appointed District Court Judge for North Carolina in 2007 by Governor Michael Easley. From that time, until his retirement in 2013, Billy practiced as William A. Marsh Jr., PLLC. Billy was always dapperly dressed , and a stickler for detail and precision in all endeavors. He was known for his wit an humor. He enlivened many dull discussions with levity and brought groups to consensus on volatile issues locally and at the NC State Board of Elections. Throughout his practice, he made himself available to other lawyers and set high standards for his peers.

He is survived by his wife of 63 years , Bernice S.Marsh, his son, William A. (Drew) Marsh III (Sonja), his daughter, Jewel M. Cummings of Atlanta, GA, his grandchildren, William A.Marsh IV, Kylie Alexandra Marsh, Nicholas Emerson Marsh, and Jade Sawyer Cummings. He is also survived by his sister, Pauline Marsh Caffey of Charleston , SC, and nieces, Christine (Chris)Williams of West Palm Beach, Florida, Pauline(Paula) Caffey of Bethesda, Maryland and Angela Harvey Dickens (Elmer) of Suffolk, Virginia.

Funeral services will take place on Saturday, November 24, 2018 at St. Joseph A.M.E. Church, 2521 Fayetteville Street, Durham, North Carolina 27707 at 12:30 p.m., with a family visitation beginning at 11:00 a.m.

Cemetery Details

Beechwood Cemetery

3300 Fayetteville St
Durham, NC 27707
(919) 560-4154

Previous Events

Omega Ceremony

NOV 24. 10:00 AM (ET)

St. Joseph AME Church
2521 Fayetteville St
Durham, NC 27707
(919) 683-1379

Masonic Rites

NOV 24. 10:30 AM (ET)

St. Joseph AME Church
2521 Fayetteville St
Durham, NC 27707
(919) 683-1379

Visitation

NOV **24**. 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM (ET)

St. Joseph AME Church
2521 Fayetteville St
Durham, NC 27707
(919) 683-1379

Celebration of Life

NOV **24**. 12:30 PM (ET)

St. Joseph AME Church
2521 Fayetteville St
Durham, NC 27707
(919) 683-1379

Tribute Wall



“ *Mr. William A. Marsh, Jr.*

October 05, 2023 at 11:31 AM



“ *Extending condolences to the Marsh family. Remembering each of you from our days in Durham and St. Joseph.
Willie J and Willie Mae Williams*

Willie Mae Williams - November 24, 2018 at 10:05 PM



“ *Jewel Marsh Cummings and the Marsh Family
We extend our deepest condolences to you and your family on your loss, along with our prayers of comfort and love.
The HHS Class of 1981 mourns with you.
Those we love remain with us
for love itself lives on...author unknown*

HHS Class of 1981

Angela M Hopkins,HHS Class of 81 - November 24, 2018 at 06:50 PM

SP

“ Grace and Peace to the Marsh Family---

I am Sandra W. Parham. It was a honor and a privilege to have served as Legal Secretary for Attorney William A. Marsh, Jr. --- 1989-1992. He was an admirable and remarkable Attorney and person. He was a man of distinction and took the most pride in everything that he did.

May his legacy continue.

Always look to the Lord for guidance and strength.

Sandra W. Parham - November 24, 2018 at 06:42 PM

VM

“ Condolences to you and your family, Val Hannah-Murphy

Val Hannah- Murphy - November 24, 2018 at 05:13 PM

MM

“ *Magnolia P. McMillian*



Magnolia P. McMillian - November 24, 2018 at 12:28 AM

JC

“ *Attorney Billy Marsh was a close friend of the Cozart Family. We shared lots of conversations, working relationships, laughter, delicious soul food and great fellowship. We will truly miss him.*

We are in prayer for the entire family, as we all know that he's resting in a much better place.... "Safe In His Arms"... May God continue to bless you!

Clint & Johnette Cozart & Family

Johnette Cozart - November 23, 2018 at 10:37 PM

DF

“ *On behalf of Beta Phi Chapter of The Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc., we send our prayers of uplift to the Marsh Family during this time of bereavement. We are forever grateful for the legacy that Brother Marsh leaves with our Fraternity. He will never be forgot.*

Rest In Peace Brother Marsh!

*David L. Fitts
Basileus, Beta Phi Chapter
Durham N.C.*

David L. Fitts - November 23, 2018 at 03:51 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Mr. William A. Marsh, Jr..*



November 23, 2018 at 03:39 PM

WB

“ *Billy was indeed one of a kind. It was my sincere honor and privilege to have known him and worked with him, in many capacities, over my years in Durham, NC.*

Please accept our sincere condolences as we honor his life.

*WILLIAM V. "BILL" BELL
AND
FAMILY*

WILLIAM V."BILL" BELL - November 23, 2018 at 01:40 PM

MH

“ *Michael L. Hughes lit a candle in memory of Mr. William A. Marsh, Jr.*



Michael L. Hughes - November 23, 2018 at 12:41 PM

WJ

“ *Sincere sympathy is expressed to the family of Attorney William A. Marsh, Jr. Our prayer is that God will strengthen and comfort you during this time of transition.*

Dr. & Mrs. William W. Easley, Jr.

William W. Easley, Jr. - November 23, 2018 at 11:05 AM

PF

“ *Plum Street Families sent a virtual gift in memory of Mr. William A. Marsh, Jr.*



Plum Street Families - November 23, 2018 at 09:05 AM

HF

“ *Holliday Family lit a candle in memory of Mr. William A. Marsh, Jr.*



Holliday Family - November 23, 2018 at 09:03 AM

OA

“The African Methodist Episcopal Church, Clergy Family Information Center, express profound sympathy to the family of Atty. William A. Marsh, Jr., Special Counsel AME Church and former President, Judicial Counsel AME Church, in your loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with you at-this-time of sorrow.

“Wishing you the peace that comes from knowing God Is there and praying that He will keep you in His promised, gentle care.”

In sympathy and in prayer,

*Mrs. Ora L. Easley, Administrator,
The AMEC Clergy Family Information Center*

*Mrs. Jacquelyn DuPont-Walker, Director
The Commission on Social Action*

*Bishop Frank M. Reid, III, Chair
The Commission on Social Action
African Methodist Episcopal Church*

Ora L. Easley, Administrator AMEC-CFIC - November 22, 2018 at 07:23 PM

CF

“Connie L. Faison lit a candle in memory of Mr. William A. Marsh, Jr.



Connie L. Faison - November 22, 2018 at 05:01 PM

VD

“ *Your Masonic family, the Upper Piedmont Area sending prayers for your comfort during this time of loss. Verginald J. Drumwright Roxboro NC*



Verginald Drumwright - November 22, 2018 at 07:35 AM

EG

“ *I share fond memories of Attorney Marsh. Employed by him for a short period on Chapel Hill St., Durham, was a true learning experience for me. He was wise, kind and always professional. I fondly remember him referring to his Mom as Mrs. Alston while we were in the office. Mrs. Alston worked across the hall from our office with Attorney M. Hugh Thompson and she also was brilliant and kind.*

Attorney Marsh and His mother were instrumental in providing me with financial decisions that I am grateful for today. My last visit with him was pleasant and we reminisced about our working days and shared numerous laughs together.

Rest in peach William A. Marsh, jr., Esquire. Thanks for your kindness.

My sincere sympathy to the family.

Earnestine Manning Goods

Earnestine Manning Goods - November 21, 2018 at 06:05 PM

LN

“ TO THE FAMILY OF ATTORNEY MARSH:
OUR CHURCH IS STRONGER AND MORE VIABLE TODAY
BECAUSE OF THE
LEADERSHIP EXEMPLIFIED THROUGH THIS
COURAGEOUS, KNOWLEDGEABLE
AND DIGNIFIED SERVANT:
I FONDLY REMEMBER HIS CHARISMATIC STYLE AND
PROFESSIONALISM AT
OUR GENERAL CONFERENCES :
REST IN PEACE :
LEON N. RICHBURG, SR
CENTRAL CONFERENCE [SOUTH CAROLINA]
[DELEGATE-2000, 2004, 2008, 2012 & 2016]
CO-LEADER [2012 & 2016 GENERAL CONFERENCES}
7 TH. EPISCOPAL DISTRICT LAY ORAGNIZATION

LEON N. RICHBURG, SR - November 21, 2018 at 04:51 PM

DO

“ *Durham County Public Defender's Office
purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for
the family of Mr. William A. Marsh, Jr..*



Durham County Public Defender's Office - November 21,
2018 at 04:50 PM

JB

“ *Juanita Bright lit a candle in memory of Mr.
William A. Marsh, Jr.*



Juanita Bright - November 21, 2018 at 11:34 AM

GG

“ Attorney William A. Marsh was an excellent legal scholar with an impact not only in North Carolina, but throughout the entire nation and may I add, many individuals within the legal community sought his supreme wisdom on a constant basis. Our prayers are with the entire family at this time as we know God is in charge! We will miss him dearly!

Geoffrey E. Gadsden and family

Geoffrey E. Gadsden - November 20, 2018 at 03:53 PM

JE

“ I never had a grandpa growing up but once I met Mr. Marsh at Croasdaile for 5 years he became my family, and I saw him like a grandpa. I'm sure going to miss him and our talks. I will miss you.



jalilah ellis - November 20, 2018 at 08:35 AM

MW

My deepest sympathy to the family.

Maecie W. White - November 23, 2018 at 11:44 AM

VP

My deepest sympathy to the marsh family

velma Parker-Johnson - November 23, 2018 at 03:51 PM

PC

Words are inadequate to express my heartfelt sympathy to the Marsh family in the passing of an outstanding layman and legal practitioner. Attorney Marsh was committed to excellence and high standards in all of his undertakings. It was my good pleasure to get to know him when I served as President of the Second Episcopal District Lay Organization. He was always positive and encouraging.

Be comforted with the knowledge that God's grace is sufficient to carry you through this time of bereavement.

*Dr. Paulette Coleman
Retired General Officer
African Methodist Episcopal Church*

Paulette Coleman - November 24, 2018 at 03:31 PM

BR

My thoughts and prayers are with the family in the passing of a great man. I worked with him on a constant basis at Tanya S. Branch, CPA. He was also instrumental in my obtaining my first job which was with the Durham County Board of Elections while I was attending college. Attorney Marsh was a very special person and I will never forget his sense of detail, wit and compassion. May he rest in peace!

Barbara A. Richmond

Barbara A. Richmond - November 25, 2018 at 04:02 PM