

'TIS THE SOUNDS
HONORING
The Reverend Leo J. Walker, Sr.
A MUSICAL JOURNEY

Former band students and family invite the public to a special tribute program honoring Rev. Leo Joseph Walker, Sr., Sunday, December 22, 2019 at 4:00 o'clock pm at First Baptist Church, 1116 Amulet Street in the H.B. Barnum Fellowship Hall. Former students are invited to present a musical tribute in a group ensemble on their instrument. Contact: Michael Kennedy at 713) 503-7828 or Gwen Antee Hardison-Davis at (318) 290-7973 for more information.

BIOGRAPHY

Leo Joseph Waker, Sr.

Leo is the son of the late Carrie Lee Jean Baptiste Walker Bell and Berner Leon Walker. Leo's mother was the oldest daughter of Mr. Ezekiel Jean Baptiste, Sr. and Mrs. Mayana Bobb Jean Baptiste, who spent their lives in Natchitoches, Louisiana and the great grandson of Flaviant Jean Baptiste, Sr.

Leo graduated from Central High School in Natchitoches, LA (1962) as Valedictorian of his class. He then attended Grambling College (now Grambling State University) and earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Instrumental Music Education in 1966. He continued his education at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, LA, Louisiana State University, and Northeast Louisiana University (now University of Louisiana at Monroe) as he taught music ad band in the Natchitoches Parish School System for 37 years. Leo was an active member of Louisiana Educator's Association (LEA) and served as treasurer of the Natchitoches chapter. He has been an active member of Prince Hall Masons for over 50 years. He became an active member of his community by serving on various committees and in community groups focused on community improvement. Never being one to let grass grow under his feet, he used skills he learned from his grandfather to be a painter and carpenter as a hobby. After surviving a major car accident in 1976, Leo's faith in God became the major driving force in his life; and in 1994 he became the Pastor of the historical St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, (Bermuda Community, Natchez, LA).

Leo has been married to Barbara Jo' Mitchell walker since December 1965. They have six children: Leo Joseph Walker, Jr. (Janee), Letitia Jo' Walker-Johnson (Martin, Sr.), LaLeta Jo' Walker-Anderson (Derick), LaMer Joseph Walker, Lakesh Jo' Wallker, and LaShunda Jo' Walker. Leo and Barbara are the proud grandparents of Alexis Walker, Sydney Walker, Whitney Walker, Martin Luther Johnson, Jr., Kiara Alexandra Walker, Malari Alexis Walker-Williams (Derrick),

2.

Madison Mackenzie Johnson, Joseph Arthur Johnson, Derrick Jamont Anderson, II, Domenick Jamont Anderson, and Walker Thomas Stone. They are the proud great-grandparents of Jazelle Alyse Douglas, Gianna Rose Williams, and Phoenix Reign Williams.

Former student and program initiator and coordinator, Michael Kennedy said, "I've always wanted to do something special for Rev. Walker. He did so much for so many of us (school children). He helped us to get scholarships in band at Grambling". Mike with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Computer Science with a Minor in Math, still plays his trumpet, as an adult, today for various activities in a multi-state area in a band in which he organized, called Klock Work. Several members of the Houston based band are originally from Natchitoches and were under Walker's leadership in parish schools. Schools Walker serviced included Allen High, Robeline, Natchez, North Natchitoches (now L.P. Vaughn), Parks, Northwestern State University Junior High (NSU), NSU Middle Lab, Natchitoches Central High, Marthaville, and Provencal. Mike also remembers, as a band student, going to First Baptist Church, Amulet, where Rev. Walker is a member, to perform various Christmas programs.

While a student at Grambling College, under the leadership of Band Master, Conrad Hutchinson, Jr., Walker was a part of an era in which Grambling became a world-renown figure in music, especially the marching band during the 1960's. He was also asked by one of his music teachers to attend a Kappa Kappa Psi conference meeting along with fellow classmate, Jo Mills. Kappa Kappa Psi, a National Honorary Band Fraternity is a fraternity for college and university band members in the United States. As a result of their attendance Walker was instrumental in establishing the music honors fraternity at Grambling that exists to date.

After completion of college, he was responsible in securing numerous scholarships for students. What was most memorable to him was an accolade from Mr. Hutchinson. "Hutch" as he was affectionately called, told Leo he didn't have any problems with the students he sent to them (Grambling). Walker commanded great discipline from his students and received great admiration and respect.

As I reflect on my cousins' musical journey, I remember family sitting around the television during Grambling's band debut during the 1960's in California during one of the football games, in San Diego. We all had our eyes trying to spot "Bubba" as we call him, on the field marching. One would say, "there he is!" then another, "that's him right there!", and the whoop-la went on until the show was over. We were so proud of him and Grambling's band making a national debut.

Even before Bubba's musical journey at college, he made grave educational strides in high school while at Central. During his speech as valedictorian of his class, I remembered how he

3.

started it --with a great thundering sound asking the question, "What Time Is It?". People started looking around at each other and their watches to check the time--there were of course no cell phones during that era. After a moment of silence--the pause-- he continued with great substance.

Barbara Jo' was the Salutatorian of their class. They, seemingly, have been inseparable for most of their life. She said to me during the interview, "I've been with him over half of my life--over fifty years. I was in sixth grade when he'd buy me pearls." He said, "with my money I made from painting and cleaning people's houses, I'd buy her necklaces and rings". We chuckled at how each remembered him buying her and she receiving gifts from him at such a tender age.

Long before Leo "Bubba" Walker confessed the ministry, in his young adult life, he carried the Lord's messages - we didn't know then that he was literally carrying the message of Christ. We just recognized scripture written on beautiful royal blue cardboard in a silvery, shiny, glittery message quoting sacred text. He sold these motto's, as they were called, for a small fee, door-to-door, to people who lived in the neighborhood. People readily bought them. I believe they must have sold for about a dime. He doesn't remember the price - but he does know that it was "little of nothing". That let me know, even today, that cost wasn't a factor. It was the Lord's hand in his life. During those early years in our youth, walking to neighbors' homes provided an avenue of lots of laughter and great fellowship while spreading the Good News of Christ. Leo Joseph Walker, Sr. has been on a life's musical journey for many years with Christ as the center and he as servant leader.

Gwendolyn Faye Antee Hardison-Davis