



Mr. Commodore Coles, Sr.

June 2, 1924 - March 15, 2013

COLES, Mr. Commodore, Sr., age 88, passed away Friday, March 15, 2013 at his residence.

Wake 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Thursday, March 21, 2013 at UAW Local 599, 812 Leith Street. Family hour 10:00 a.m. Friday, March 22, 2013 at Canaan Baptist Church, 910 E. Gillespie Ave., with funeral service commencing at 11:00 a.m. Rev. Charles E. Roots Pastor, Rev. Brian Coles officiating. Interment Great Lakes National Cemetery, G-4200 Belford Rd., Holly, MI. Friends and pallbearers will assemble at the Church 10:00 a.m. Friday. Mr. Coles will lie in state in the Chapel of Lawrence E. Moon Funeral Home, 906 W. Flint Park Blvd., and may be viewed from 10 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Thursday.

Born in Williamsburg, West Virginia on June 2, 1924, Commodore Coles, Sr. was the eldest son of Bishop S. C. Coles and Willie Hooker Brown Coles. Having been reared as “a preacher’s kid”, Commodore was particularly active in providing the essential support vital in the development and progression of his father’s ministry within the Church of God in Christ. The Coles family migrated to Detroit, Michigan finally settling in Flint; where Commodore’s life journey began.

Educated in the Flint Public Schools, this victorious athlete is fondly remembered as being a football star. At the time of his High School graduation, he was drafted into the United States Army—serving his country

during World War II. Being drafted prevented him from walking with his senior class. Upon being honorably discharged he returned home to Flint, Michigan. It was not until 2001 that Commodore, a proud graduate of the Flint Northern High School class of 1942 received his diploma.

Marrying the love of his life, Bernice Lucille Henderson, on June 1, 1946, the union of these high school sweethearts was blessed with five children.

Mr. Coles was employed at Buick, a division of General Motors Corporation and retired after 30 years of tenure. During this time, one of his greatest passions was being a United Auto Workers' Union Representative. His leadership role and commitment to the UAW proved to be a noteworthy accomplishment. An advocate for positive change and an usher for innovation as he paved the way for many; Commodore Coles readily taught next-generation employees of the significance of labor unions, as well as the importance of knowing history with regard to the establishment and maintenance of craft/labor unions. As a part of the Legislative Committee, some of his notable contributions to the field of labor relations included aiding younger employees with retaining job security, campaigning for local, state, and national governmental candidates, and he was instrumental in getting people registered to vote. He was also a member of Unity for Justice, a caucus within UAW Local 599.

Early on, when General Motors introduced a substance abuse program, he served as an active counselor—yet, another example of Commodore's ability to offer service, supportiveness, as well as exhibit skillful guidance.

Remarkably, long before alcoholism was declared a disease, Commodore Coles counseled in various Substance Abuse Programs advocating for those challenged with this illness. From Michigan State University, he received a Merit Award for Alcohol and Drug Education Training through the School of Labor and Industrial Relations.

Commodore's willingness to serve expounded beyond General Motors. The Michigan State Democratic Party recognized him as the longest serving elected precinct delegate in the State of Michigan. As a result of his dedication and leadership, he has been recognized by several organizations at national, state and local levels. Numerous outstanding recognitions and awards include: A Key to the City of Flint, City of Flint Humanitarian Award, The Earl A. Crompton Memorial Award from the Genesee County Community Action Agency, Sheriff Joe Wilson's Special Deputy for Special People Outstanding Service Award, Outstanding Achievement in Labor Solidarity Award presented by UAW Region 1-C; Unity For Justice Community-Labor Award, and Senior Citizen Service Award on behalf of the Philip Randolph Institute.

Further, Mr. Coles was a recipient of the prestigious Walter P. Reuther Distinguished Service Award from UAW, which is the highest honor that the UAW bestows upon its members; an honoree for the State of Michigan's Democratic Party at its Jefferson and Jackson Day Dinner; After becoming a member of the retiree group of Local 599, Commodore Coles became Vice President for several terms—continuing to demonstrate his talent for serving people.

Brother Coles was a longstanding member of Canaan Baptist Church in Flint, Michigan. His dedication to the Lord, and to his family, made him a role model to all those he came in contact with. Undeniably, the life journey of Commodore Coles, Sr. has been one of service to God, church, country and community. Still, his tender-most service has been to his family in love and fulfillment.

His legacy is now entrusted to his devoted wife of 67 years, Bernice L. Henderson Coles; his children: Commodore Coles, Jr. (Angelene) of

Columbia, SC, Carolyn Coles Benton of Buffalo, NY, Pamela Coles of Charlotte, NC, Brian Coles of Houston, TX, and Bruce Coles of Flint, MI.

Also, keepers of his memory are eight grandchildren: William Coles of Flint, MI, Michelle McNear (Marcus) of Columbia, SC, Taheera Benton of Atlanta, GA, Jacquelynn Coles of Lowell, MA, Michael Coles of Flint, MI, Clinton Byrd III (Tawana) of Fayetteville, NC, Tia Coles of Flint, MI, and Louis Benton II of Buffalo, NY; and three great grandchildren: Marcus McNear, Jr., Clinton Byrd IV, and Malachi Byrd.

Additional surviving family members are sisters-in-law: Helen Coles of Detroit, MI and Rose Coles Jones; and one brother-in-law, Clarence Henderson both of Flint, MI, and a host of other nieces, nephews, cousins, relatives and friends.

Commodore Coles, Sr. was the last surviving family member of Bishop S. C. Coles' immediate family. He was preceded in death by his parents, Bishop S. C. Coles and Willie Hooker Brown Coles; brothers: Isadore Coles and Sylvester "Bug" Coles Jr.; granddaughter, Charlotte L. Byrd; and son-in-law, Louis C. Benton.

And now, may God's grace and peace be with you; and, may He forever bless you as He has blessed us with unconditional love and the heart's memory of our beloved, Commodore Coles, Sr.

Cemetery Details

Great Lakes National Cemetery

G-4200 Belford Rd.
Holly, MI 48442

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 21. 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Lawrence E. Moon Funeral Home Chapel, Flint
906 W. Flint Park Blvd.
Flint, MI 48505
(810) 789-MOON (6666)
lemoonfhflint@gmail.com
<http://www.lawrenceemoonfuneralhome.com>

Wake

MAR 21. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

UAW Local 599
812 Leith Street
Flint, MI 48505

Family hour

MAR 22. 10:00 AM (ET)

Canaan Baptist Church
910 E. Gillespie St.
Flint, MI

Service

MAR 22. 11:00 AM (ET)

Canaan Baptist Church
910 E. Gillespie St.
Flint, MI

Tribute Wall



“ *Mr. Commodore Coles, Sr.*

October 09, 2023 at 07:02 AM



“ *Barbara McFarland-Brown lit a candle in memory of Mr. Commodore Coles, Sr.*



Barbara McFarland-Brown - April 23, 2013 at 10:54 PM



To the Coles family I wish to extend my sincere condolences, recently, we too endured the painful sudden painful loss nly; of one in our family due to illness..He was a fine young man.. Because of this, I wasn't contacted until after Mr. Coles homegoing celebration. My late husband (Carnel Brown) knew Commodore Jr., shared good things about him, I graduated with Brian, again great things to say about him too. That alone speaks volumes of how the children were raised. Family, you're in my prayers, May God Bless/Keep you.

Barbara McFarland-Brown - April 23, 2013 at 11:09 PM



“ *I am so sorry to hear of the lost of such a fine man, may GOD continue to bless the Coles family!*

Michael Winchester - March 27, 2013 at 06:37 AM

LA

“ *LaVerne Arther lit a candle in memory of Mr. Commodore Coles, Sr.*



LaVerne Arther - March 23, 2013 at 12:02 AM

LA

To the entire Cole family: Please accept my deepest sympathy in the loss of your love one. Carolyn & Commodore Jr. were classmates of mine at Northwestern. It was apparent by the way they carried themselves, that they were raised by good and caring parents. May God give you all the peace and strength you need to accept His will. Do not tell your loved one "bye," only tell him "See you later..." And know that he, like us, was only passing through this place we are in and, has only gone home to the Father. We all belong to the Almighty God. Peace be with you all. LaVerne

LaVerne Arther - March 23, 2013 at 12:07 AM

LA

....he, like us.

LaVerne Arther - March 23, 2013 at 12:08 AM

SB

“ My earliest memories of Mr. Coles and the Coles family are at Canaan Baptist Church. Our Families have remained close throughout my lifetime. He and Mrs Coles are faithful, kind and loving people. Always with a smile they greet everyone. Their Children I still hold close in my heart...they were like extended family. May God grant you all peace and comfort that surpasses all understanding as you go through this time and for the rest of your lives as you remember such a great man. Cry if you must and I'm sure you will...but cry knowing that your hope is in The Lord Jesus Christ who gives us the victory. May the Grace of God Be with You Always.

Love and Much Respect. Scott Allen Coleman Bard.

Scott A. Coleman Bard - March 22, 2013 at 10:03 AM

BW

“ Mr Coles: A man that set an excellent example and left a great legacy. He was always encouraging others to move forward. He has moved forward, from mortal to immortality. He has told his story. He has given us direction to help us tell ours. God is a strong tower He is a shelter for me. Weeping only endures for a night, but joy cometh in the morning and is eternal. You all are always in my prayers.

Bennie Williams

Bennie Williams - March 21, 2013 at 03:16 PM

RO

“ Rosie lit a candle in memory of Mr. Commodore Coles, Sr.



Rosie - March 21, 2013 at 10:20 AM

AD

“ *Angilena- L E Moon F/H Pre-need Dept. lit a candle in memory of Mr. Commodore Coles, Sr.*



Angilena- L E Moon F/H Pre-need Dept. - March 20, 2013 at 11:11 PM

LG

“ *Dear Coles Family and Friends,
I am so sorry to hear of your loss. The “Hearer of prayer” promises to give holy spirit to those who sincerely ask for it at Psalms 65:2. It helps me to pray for strength, and to rely on friends and family when I’m grieving, and I hope it helps you through this most difficult transition.(Phillipians4:6) Death will soon be “swallowed up forever” and we will have the opportunity to see our dead loved ones again. (Isaiah 25:8) My family and I wish you and yours peace. (Phillipians4:7)*

Lisa G. - March 19, 2013 at 04:42 PM

TR

“ *Tureia Roberts lit a candle in memory of Mr. Commodore Coles, Sr.*



Tureia Roberts - March 18, 2013 at 06:37 PM

DR

“ I have very fond memories of Commodore. He was a good man. He always had a smile to share. I am unable to visit the funeral home because I am out of state at this time. I am sorry for your heartache.

Debbie Ross-Ford

Debra Ross-Ford - March 18, 2013 at 02:52 PM

AM

“ Mrs Coles,
Marie and I share in your grief and Loss. Commodore was a great union leader and will be missed. He taught us how to take care of our homes. We loved him and will miss him. Our prayer is that the Lord will give you the strength that he promised, and wipe away you tears and sorrows.

Arthur and Marie McGee

Arthur McGee - March 17, 2013 at 11:26 PM

HV

“ Hope Vasilas lit a candle in memory of Mr. Commodore Coles, Sr.



Hope Vasilas - March 17, 2013 at 06:57 PM

JC

“ Pamela & family it was sad to read of Commodore's passing. He was always so kind and humors when we talked. I know he will be missed by many. Cherish the many memories you have of him. I'm sorry I can't attend the visitation or funeral because of my health, but my prayers are with all of you at this sad time.

Jeri Cooper - March 17, 2013 at 02:17 PM

A.

“ Dear Family, Please accept my condolences on the loss of your dear loved one. And may the "Hearer of Prayers (Jehovah God) comfort your family and provide you with peace and encouragement. (Psalm 62:8)

A.K. - March 17, 2013 at 10:58 AM

NE

“ My sincere condolences go out to the family of Mr. Coles. May our heavenly father Jehovah God comfort you during your bereavement. The promises in the bible are something we can count on in these wicked times and we should turn to Jehovah's words when times like these arise. Revelation 21:4 says, "He will wipe out every tear from their eyes and death will be no more, neither will mourning, outcry nor pain be anymore the former things have passed away".

neighbor - March 16, 2013 at 06:49 AM

HV

Commodore, Angie and to all the Coles Family. Sorry to hear of the loss of your beloved father. It was evident that he was a loving, caring, benevolent & hardworking family man. His legacy carries on with his children & family. May the peace that comes from the memories of love shared, comfort you now & in the days ahead.
May his memory be Eternal.
Hope Vasilas & Family

Hope Vasilas - March 17, 2013 at 07:12 PM

AJ

My prayers are with the family. Alvita Jackson

Alvita J - April 23, 2013 at 08:20 AM