



Mr. Willie E. Artis

May 30, 1934 - June 2, 2022

Willie Eldrage Artis passed away on Thursday, June 2, 2022. Holding hands with his beloved Veronica, upright in bed in fresh pajamas and bedclothes, he died at peace and at home.

Born in Memphis, Tennessee on May 30, 1934, in the midst of the Jim Crow South, Willie's intelligence, persistence, and determination drove him to create an industry-leading packaging company in his adopted hometown of Flint, MI. Willie's life's work, Genesee Packaging Company, was a significant minority-owned corporation that did business with General Motors. From its inception in 1979, Mr. Artis steered his company through the ups and downs associated with the American auto industry to the point where he was consulted by governors, members of congress and presidents.

Perhaps the story of Willie's life is best understood with a quote from his autobiography *From Jim Crow to CEO; the Willie E. Artis Story*: "How does a poor Black kid from Memphis living under Jim Crow do something extraordinary with his life?"

It started with that poor Black kid's parents: Violet and James. From them, Willie learned that hard work could make a difference; that one could, even in the worst of racist times, stand up for one's rights, and that integrity was the cornerstone of success. Willie put those childhood lessons to work throughout his life.

At an early age, Willie Artis went to work. He mowed lawns. He did grocery deliveries. He managed a small market. He was a butcher's assistant and,

then, a butcher himself. Even before he reached junior high school, he had a burning desire to work, learn, and succeed.

Mr. Artis graduated from St. Anthony's Catholic High School in Memphis in 1952. Willie followed his brother Boots to Chicago, where he attended Wilson College in 1953-54. At 20 years old, he found himself on the floor of Triangle Container Corrugated Company as he learned the corrugated and packaging businesses from the ground up.

In 1964, Willie moved to Flint and found himself as an employee of Flint Boxmakers. In 1966, age 32, Willie was promoted to manufacturing manager. In the late 1970s, General Motors instituted minority business programs. In 1979, Mr. Artis and a Native American colleague recognized that they were experts in the corrugated and packaging business, and they qualified for those programs under the new GM guidelines. Genesee Packaging was born. Willie met his future wife Veronica when they attended minority business summer sessions at Dartmouth College in the summer of 1985. And they were married on November 25th, 1987.

Willie soon began to give back to the Flint area community. Willie was a member of the Michigan Minority Business Development Council, Genesys Health Systems, Warwick Hills Country Club, the Flint Public Library, and the Flint Business and Development Council.

Mr. Artis was tapped and recognized by a variety of governmental agencies. He served on Governor James Blanchard's Entrepreneurial Business Commission from January 1989 to June 1990. He also received special recognition from Governor Jennifer Granholm on October 13, 2005. He was awarded the Flint Jewish Federation's Don Riegler Community Service Award. In 2001, he was inducted into the Junior Achievement Business Hall of Fame. Mr. Artis has also been recognized by President Clinton, the U.S. Senate, the Michigan House of Representatives, the State of Michigan, and the City of Flint for his work in minority affairs and his business success. Mr. and Mrs. Artis were frequent guests at the Obama White House for dinners, celebrations, and the famed White House Christmas party.

He was preceded in death by his parents Violet and James, and his siblings Louvenia, Howard, and Robert (Boots.) He is survived by his lovely wife Veronica, and his children: son William Gerard and his wife Clara Renee Artis, his daughter Rhonda and her husband Erskine Roberts, and his daughter Rosalind Jimason. Willie was devoted to his granddaughters: Brittany, Faith, Charity, and Mayah. Willie is also survived by his sister, Jessie Wooten, age 91. The family would like to recognize Willie's favorite nephew, Johnny Russell and his wife Joyce. In addition, the family wants to recognize several special friends: Larry and Jane Worthing, and Terence Broussard.

To know Willie Artis was to know a man that was the last of his kind. He was kind, yet fierce. He could scare the beejezus out of an employee, and he could be the most compassionate of souls.

Willie will be cremated. A small memorial service for family and special friends will be held later this month. Willie has requested that his memory be honored with donations to his two favorite charities: The Veronica and Willie Artis Scholarship Endowment at Flint's Mott Community College or the Flint Public Library.

Tribute Wall



“ *Mr. Willie E. Artis*

October 09, 2023 at 07:02 AM



“ *Regina Williams lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis*



Regina Williams - June 12, 2022 at 12:15 PM



“ *Veronica and family we send our love and prayers during this difficult time. We cherish your friendship over the years and the memories of our golfing days. May God continue to watch over you and bring comfort.*

Tony and Theresa Harris - June 10, 2022 at 09:02 PM



“ *Linda L. Johnson-Barnes lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis*



Linda L. Johnson-Barnes - June 10, 2022 at 07:48 PM

PS

“*Veronica Artis and Family, very sorry for your loss. You and and your family are in my prayers.*”



Pamela Stokes - June 10, 2022 at 01:19 PM

MP

“*Malirria Snowden Peters lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis*”



Malirria Snowden Peters - June 09, 2022 at 01:09 PM

DW

“*Derrek & Regina Williams lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis*”



Derrek & Regina Williams - June 08, 2022 at 09:39 AM

VP

“*Veronica and family, I pray that your precious memories will help ease the pain of the loss of a great man.*”

Vivian Pickard - June 07, 2022 at 06:55 AM

GS

“ Rest in Power Mr. Artis, it was an honor knowing you. You were a stalwart of our community, always a phone call away with advice, contributions, or just a kind word. I'll always remember your pleasant and gentlemanly demeanor. My sincerest condolences to your family who loved and treasured you.



Gloria Scruggs - June 06, 2022 at 10:22 PM

GS

“ Gloria Scruggs sent a virtual gift in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis



Gloria Scruggs - June 06, 2022 at 10:17 PM

TT

“ Teresa Thomas sent a virtual gift in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis



Teresa Thomas - June 06, 2022 at 07:21 PM

TT

“ Teresa Thomas sent a virtual gift in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis



Teresa Thomas - June 06, 2022 at 07:19 PM

RR

“ *Veronica and Family, So sorry for your loss. Mr. Artis was a one of a kind individual. He will be missed. My prayers are with you all. May you have many great memories in your hearts for him.*

Rita Ross - June 06, 2022 at 05:06 PM

RR

“ *Rita Ross lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis*



Rita Ross - June 06, 2022 at 05:00 PM

VS

“ *Valerie Southall lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis*



Valerie Southall - June 06, 2022 at 04:40 PM

MP

“ *What an outstanding man. We salute you. Rest in Heavenly Peace.*



Mr. & Mrs. J. Poindexter - June 06, 2022 at 04:13 PM

AB

“ *Althea J Barbee lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis*



Althea J Barbee - June 06, 2022 at 03:54 PM

RS

“ *There will never be another one like you Mr. Willie Artis
It is a very sad day when you lose such a pillar of your community.*

*Thank you for the opportunity that you blessed me with over 45
years ago, my success was driven by your support and leadership.*

*I have always had the up most respect and admiration for you,
So proud to have known you. You will be dearly missed.*

Until we meet again, God love you my friend.

Rick Simpson - June 06, 2022 at 10:56 AM

DW

“ *Denise Wynne lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis*



denise wynne - June 06, 2022 at 08:28 AM

DW

“ *Denise Wynne sent a virtual gift in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis*



denise wynne - June 06, 2022 at 08:27 AM

MH

“ *Marilyn Hudson lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis*



Marilyn Hudson - June 06, 2022 at 12:23 AM

TJ

“ *Tanya Jefferson lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis*



Tanya Jefferson - June 05, 2022 at 06:40 PM

ET

“ *Ernelle Taylor lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis*



Ernelle Taylor - June 05, 2022 at 05:27 PM

LM

“ *One of the Greatest I ever worked for. Veronica and Family you are in my Prayers. Rest in Heavenly Peace Job well done.*

Linda Miller-Wilkerson - June 05, 2022 at 02:35 PM

AD

“ *My sincerest thoughts and condolences are with the entire family during their time of bereavement!*



AC Dumas - June 05, 2022 at 02:14 PM

TC

“ *Our condolences to the Artis Family! Veronica, stay strong in the memory of Willie's love for you, and may He rest in peace. Tom & Wilma*



Tom & Wilma Cordy - June 05, 2022 at 01:25 PM

CB

“ *Dear Veronica and family, May the Good Lord grant you a many loving memories of this wonderful man. Rest in Peace my dear friend.*

Cassandra Sue Blackford - June 05, 2022 at 09:50 AM

SM

“ Sharon Mixon lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis



Sharon Mixon - June 05, 2022 at 12:59 AM

TB

“ Sorry for your loss praying 🙏 for the family

Tammie Brim - June 04, 2022 at 02:52 PM

TB

“ Belinda walker wishing the family blessings

Tammie Brim - June 04, 2022 at 02:50 PM

TB

“ Tammie Brim lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis



Tammie Brim - June 04, 2022 at 02:24 PM

TB

“ Sorry for the loss it was a blessing to meet you (Genesse Package) RIP my prayers are with the family

Tammie Brim - June 04, 2022 at 02:23 PM

JB

“ So sorry to hear about the passing of Mr Artis. May God continue to keep you and your family in this time of sorrow. Praying for you and the family.



James and Lisa Blakley - June 04, 2022 at 08:46 AM

OC

“ ORA CARTER lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis



ORA CARTER - June 04, 2022 at 07:44 AM

RS

“ Veronica and the entire Artis family
My sincere thoughts and prayers on the loss of your beloved husband and father. May his love and the love of family and friends comfort you during your grief.

Reta Stanley - June 04, 2022 at 06:32 AM

DF

“ Driskell Family lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis



Driskell Family - June 03, 2022 at 09:04 PM

GQ

“ Gladys Quarles lit a candle in memory of Mr. Willie E. Artis



Gladys Quarles - June 03, 2022 at 01:59 PM

AD

“ My sincerest thoughts and condolences are with the entire family during their time of bereavement!



AC Dumas - June 03, 2022 at 12:02 PM

LM

Our thoughts and prayers are with the Artis family. We share in the loss of your loved one.

*Mable and Louis Brumfield - Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Fred and Loretta Milow - Flint, Michigan*

Loretta Milow - June 10, 2022 at 12:46 PM