

In loving memory of Willie Wilder, Jr.

The Little Boy from Alabama...

Willie Wilder, Jr. was born March 13, 1932, to the late Margie Hill and Willie Wilder, Sr. in Haleyville, Alabama. At an early age Willie and his mother moved to Philadelphia, PA where she met and married Roosevelt Rowe. Educated in the Philadelphia public school system, after graduating he was employed with the Container Cooperation of America (CCA). He worked as a Forklift Driver, a Foreman and Shop Steward for their union and remained there until he retired after 40 years of service. After retiring from CCA he went to work at Ancora Psychiatric Hospital in Hammonton, New Jersey for 10 years where he retired in March of 1997.

A Freedom Fighter

Willie participated in the 1963 March on Washington as well as The March on Selma to Montgomery. He would vividly recall how the nonviolent March on Washington was sharply contrast to the way the police in Selma respond to the marchers who tried to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge into Selma. After a long day of marching they would rest in the woods. Willie would tell many stories of how snakes and other critters would crawl around while they slept. Willie was among those who walked 12 miles a day and 4 day later reached the Alabama State Capitol in Montgomery. Locally, he participated in the march around Girard College with the Great Cecil B. Moore and others to help integrate the school.

In His Early Years

Always with the spirit of entrepreneurship he would dance and shine shoes to earn money. As a teenager Willie developed a passion for photography where he excelled and became a freelance photographer for Jet Magazine and a well-known photographer in the Philadelphia area at all the cabarets and major events. He was a fixture at some of the well-known clubs like the Blue Horizon, Barbra's Hall, Imperial and OV Catto (Octavius Catto) Social Club to name a few. In the mid 60's Willie played a significant role in establishing the historical African American Business Community on Evesham Avenue in Lawnside New Jersey. In the early 70's he opened and operated a soul food restaurant (where his specialty was Frog Legs) called Hilly's Place -The little boy from Alabama, on the famous barbeque strip in Lawnside New Jersey where well-known clubs such as Whippoorwill, Cotton Club, Dreamland, Loretta's Hi Hat and Club Harlem were located. He also opened a seafood restaurant on 22nd and Diamond Street in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The Soul of The Man

Willie will be remembered as a lively and vivacious person. He was affectionately known as a mean dancing machine. He combined dances from the 1930's to the 90's, working the dance floor all night long. Never duplicated, his signature move was crossing his arms over his chest dipping and hitting the floor with alternating knees.

The End of a Freedom Fighter

On December 13, 2017, in Tuscaloosa Alabama, the Lord called Willie the freedom fighter home. A private service was held in Tuscaloosa Alabama. A memorial service will be held in March in Philadelphia, PA.

Family

He leaves to celebrate his life, his wife Juanita Blige-Wilder of Alabama, two brothers Fletcher Wilder (Emereld), Johnnie James (Valerie). One sister Sallie Mae, Jewel Wilder and James Taylor Wilder who preceded him in death. 8 children Lynda Burrell, Willie Ernest Wilder, Linda Fox (Harum), Willie Love (Carylon), Marie Ward (James), Clyde Jordan (Millicent), Willie Jordan (Chrisestle), Mark Jordan (Pricilla) and a host of grandchildren, great grandchildren, nieces, nephews, extended family and friends. One loving and special friend Beverly Logan.