

James McKnight(1930 - 2015)



HOUSTON - James Edward McKnight was born Oct. 29, 1930 in Denison, Texas to Drewey D. McKnight Sr. and Carrie Blackshear McKnight. He was the fourth of 10 children born to this union.

Before graduating from Terrell High School in Denison, James accepted Christ as his Savior. He went on to graduate from Prairie View A&M University with a bachelor's degree in 1952, returning later to earn a master's in education administration degree. He did post graduate studies at Texas A&M University.

Upon graduation, James accepted a teaching position in wood shop and math at Blackshear High School in Hearne, Texas, the town of his mother's birth. He married Naomi Blocker, a fellow graduate of Prairie View and teacher at Blackshear, on July 18, 1953. To this union two children, Sherunda Carol and James Jr., were born. While in Hearne, James coached football, basketball and baseball, started an ROTC drill team, led the boys Hi-Y youth program and also drove the school bus. James was responsible for designing the homecoming floats for the Hearne parades and building the concession stand at the football stadium with his woodworking class. He was a trustee and Sunday school teacher for Bethel A.M.E. Church in Hearne, Texas.

The family moved to Houston, Texas in 1962 and James accepted a teaching position at Jack Yates High School. He taught drafting there for six years and designed the homecoming floats for Jack Yates each year.

Because of his strong Christian faith, James became a trustee at Wayman Chapel A.M.E. in Houston. As an excellent draftsman and architect, James designed and drew the plans for their current church building. Later, James and Naomi became members of Riverside United Methodist Church and were active in leadership and the choir there until poor health prevented their participation.

James has had many civic, social and charitable affiliations which included but are not limited to the Wesley Foundation, Gideon's International, Phi Delta Kappa, McKnight Scholarship Fund and singing in the Ebony Opera Guild.

In 1970, James became the first Black assistant principle at Sam Houston High School. He later became assistant principle at Wheatley High School, administrator, staff development HISD, retiring in 1989 as assistant principle at Kashmere High School. James' 27 years of service in the Houston Independent School District touched countless lives, in and out of school. After retirement, he focused on their successful business.

James is survived by: his loving wife of 61 years, Naomi; daughter, Sherunda Johnson-Grady (Michael); son, James McKnight Jr; three grandsons - Markus Johnson (Jessica), Kevin Johnson (Marissa) and David Johnson; six great-grandsons - Jalen, D'Ante, Keedran, Amari, Brett and Chance Johnson; four sisters - Georgia Jones, Gloria Champion, Wanda Busby and Carrol Outlay (Jerry); one brother, Drewey D. McKnight Jr; and a host of cousins, nieces, nephews and friends.

James' parents, Drewey D. McKnight Sr. and Carrie Blackshear McKnight, as well as siblings Glenda McKnight Curtis, Leslie McKnight and William McKnight, preceded him in death.

James was an excellent husband, father and outstanding example of Godly manhood. He was loved and admired by all who met him and will be remembered for his lasting contributions to his family, the education profession, the state of Texas and the kingdom of God. Although family and friends alike will miss him, James lived a full life, gave the world his best, and is now receiving his eternal reward.

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