

Obituary

William Henry "Mike" Lane was a faithful servant of God and devoted husband and father who found rest on Sunday, October 4, 2015, after a long illness. Born on March 15, 1925, as the only child of the late Kelley and Evelyn Pitts, he became known to close friends as "Mike" which remained as his nickname throughout his life. He received his formal education in Baltimore City Public Schools and was an avid student of history. In his senior year at Douglas High School, he enlisted in the United States Marine Corp and was called to duty in 1943, to serve in World War II just weeks before graduation.

Up until 1942, the United States Marine Corp denied Blacks the opportunity to serve. As one of the first Black men allowed to enlist in the Marine Corp, Mike endured extreme prejudice and was assigned to a segregated and dilapidated training facility at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina known as Montford Point Camp. Upon completion of basic training, he was assigned to the Philadelphia Depot Battalion in Pennsylvania as a Warehouseman. However, even in the liberal North some could not accept Black Marines, which led to impersonation charges and the detention of Black Marines. Housing for Blacks Marines was not provided like their White counterparts, so Black Marines had to find housing with Black families or in boarding houses. In 2012, more than 65 years after his honorable discharge in 1946, the Montford Point Marines were awarded the *Congressional Gold Medal*, the highest civilian honor given by Congress, recognizing their military service with honor, courage and commitment to their country – an honor equal to the Navajo Code Talkers and Tuskegee Airman.

After his military service, he returned to Baltimore and resumed a relationship with his childhood sweetheart, the late Elinor Ann Vaughan Lane whom he had known since 14 years old. After a long courtship, they married in 1950 which produced two children, Steven and Kathy.

Mike worked at several agencies in the federal government for 42 years including the Baltimore Signal Depot, Fort Holabird and United States Postal Service. His first federal job was referred through his future father-in-law, Phillip Vaughan who wanted to ensure the financial security of his daughter. He began his career as a laborer and worked diligently through the ranks achieving various supervisory positions and numerous performance and safety awards. He received advanced training at the United States Postal Service Management Academy in Norman, Oklahoma in Accident Investigation and in 1988 retired as an Accident Investigator Supervisor.

In the 1950's, he joined his wife at Sharp Street Memorial United Methodist Church. As a faithful servant of the Lord and Church, he served on the Trustee Board, joined the Fuel Club, where he enjoyed traveling to raise funds for the church heating bills and for nearly 15 years, headed the Van Ministry transporting the elderly to church events and kids to West River Camp. His postal service experience led to the responsibility for Church communications including newsletter mailings. Since the early 1960's, he is most notably known as the unofficial "church photographer" and enjoyed photographing church events and distributing photos to family and friends.

As a father and grandfather, Mike was a great role model that exemplified Christian service. He constantly encouraged us to achieve our greatest potential. Whenever we became discouraged, he reminded us to pray and to ask for God's forgiveness. He often prayed and sought God's help throughout the day, even for things as small as finding lost keys. Everyone liked his pleasant disposition which attracted conversations even with strangers, quickly adding to his circle of friends. Together with Elinor, they had an open door policy for friends and family alike. The house was filled with love and no one could leave hungry. He loved his 9-passenger station wagon, which was always ready for family trips. He took thousands of photos and recorded 8mm movies and reel-to-reel voice recordings to preserve history for generations to come. He loved God, his family and friends, photography and shopping, shopping and more shopping.

Mike is survived by son, Steven Michael Lane; daughter, Kathy Ann Lane Robertson; daughter-in-law, Barbara J. Lane; son-in-law, Calvin D. Robertson; five (5) grandchildren, Sherri Lane Everette, Steven M. Lane, Jr., Sandra Evans King, Courtney W. Robertson and Kelley D. Robertson; thirteen (13) great-grandchildren, sister-in-law, Helen Vaughan and nieces, Joyce Martin, Frances King of Orange, N.J., Barbara Barry and nephews, Barry Randall of Brazil, Felix Vaughan, Theodore Vaughan and special cousin, Mary Louise Griffin. Special acknowledgments to nieces, Harriet Tribbles, Jackie Vaughan and Maria Chavez of West Chester, Pennsylvania.