

Richard H. McKay

Richard Hamilton McKay was born October 20, 1928. His parents were Mr. & Mrs. Julius S. McKay and Ida Joshua McKay of Clayton, Missouri. Richard was the eldest of 7 children, and as such, he learned at an early age to be a person who was responsible for the care, well being and protection of his siblings and all family. Even so, Richard and younger brother Gordon (referred to as “Joe” and “Oscar Rotten” by Dad), did on occasion “borrow” taxi cabs to practice their driving skills when they were preteens.

Richard joined church at early age, because like all the children of Julius and Ida McKay, if you had not publicly accepted Jesus by age 12, you were called up before the congregation to be baptized by the Rev. W. H. Rhodes of the First Baptist Church of Clayton.

Richard attended Attucks Elementary School in Clayton and due to Mother’s high grammar and diction standards, and the rigorous requirements of the dedicated Attucks’ teachers, he excelled at public speaking in school and church events and developed a dignified public presence. These qualities and characteristics would stay with Richard throughout his life and serve him well in future endeavors. He next attended the historic Sumner High School in St. Louis, Missouri.

At a young age, Richard decided to fight for his country during WW2, so he enlisted in the U.S. Navy in December 1944 after advancing his age by 1 year. After the boot camp training in Maryland for Black sailors, Richard’s first overseas assignment was to Casablanca and Rabat, Morocco in North Africa. Following the close of the war, he had sea duty and traveled to many European ports. Due to the military’s segregation policy, enlisted Black sailors could only be rated as “Stewards”. However, due to Richard’s public presence and poise, he was assigned the duties of a “Boatswain” and was responsible for the control and operation of a shore boat from the U.S.S. Yosemite, a destroyer tender.

Richard’s Navy enlistment ended in late 1948; he returned home and considered joining the St. Louis Police Department and other employment options. He later chose instead to enlist in the U.S. Marine Corps. Also while he was home, Richard had another life changing experience when Gordon introduced him to the lovely Miss Gloria Randolph, a Sumner High alum.

Although the U.S. military had been desegregated by President Truman’s executive order in 1948, the Marine Corps had not fully implemented the new policy, so Richard trained and graduated from boot camp in 1949 in one of the last classes of the legendary “Montford Point Marines”; the training base for Black Marines located at Montford Point, North Carolina. After graduation, Richard embarked on a military career that would total over 21 years and take him to 4 continents and the Caribbean.

In July 1950, Richard returned to St. Louis and married Gloria Randolph, the love of his life. This began a 52 year marriage and partnership that produced 3 children: Richard Jr., Joyce and Charles. Like most military families, they were stationed at many U.S. bases including Rhode Island where Joyce was born. When Richard was deployed overseas, Gloria willingly and very capably maintained the “good order and discipline” of the household and kept their quarters in spic and span condition as if ready for a military inspection.

During the latter years of Richard’s military career, he made the wise and forward thinking decision to join the air wing of the USMC. Here, he received the advanced education, training and certifications to become a jet engine mechanic for

Marine Corps aircraft. This training and career choice proved to be invaluable. When Staff Sergeant Richard McKay retired from the Marines on a Friday in August 1966, he immediately reported to work on the following Monday morning as a jet engine mechanic for Western Airlines. Richard's military experience, work ethic and public presence, caused him to excel in his new career at Western. He helped to develop and write engine repair & maintenance procedures and as a troubleshooter, he was flown from Los Angeles to various locations in the U.S. to repair disabled airliners. Since Richard might have to fly home on the same aircraft he repaired; it was guaranteed he would fix it right—the first time. Richard ultimately became a lead man with responsibility for the final inspection and testing of engines before they were put into service.

Although it was a long daily commute to LAX from the family home in Santa Ana, Western Airlines provided not only a good career, but also good travel benefits. Richard was able to frequently take his immediate family on travel outings throughout the U.S. and the Caribbean and he generously provided travel benefits to other family members as well.

After the family later moved to Riverside, and because of the heavy traffic and long drive time after work, Richard frequently delayed his trip home until traffic had cleared. He took advantage of these wait times by finding part-time work, including a stint for the L.A. Times using his wonderful speaking voice to perform polling surveys. Richard's willingness to utilize his wait time to provide more income for his family represented his commitment to Gloria, and his pride in the fact, that she would never have to work outside of the home.

Always being a life-long learner, Richard also found the time to take some college courses. In fact, he had public speaking classes with Joyce at a local college and they both participated on the speech team. Joyce was an award winning speaker (like Dad) and he took great pride in her accomplishments as well as those of all his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren whether for school, athletics or work. He was always present to support and root for Charles who excelled in football, baseball and track in high school.

When Western Airlines was acquired by Delta Airlines, Richard chose to retire in 1987 after 21 years of service rather than to relocate to Delta's maintenance headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia. Although Richard had accomplished two full retirements, he was not yet 60 years old and was still very energetic and ambitious. He was quickly hired by a Greyhound Bus Lines unit which was under contract to operate DASH shuttle buses in downtown Los Angeles as well as a commuter bus line between Orange County and Los Angeles. Within a short time after his arrival, Richard's work experience, work ethic and public presence shown through and he came to the attention of top management at the company headquarters in Dallas, Texas. The company offered Richard the position of General Manager of the operation and he accepted. As General Manager, he was responsible for the development and implementation of the bus routes & schedules and for the hiring and training of drivers and Richard received an award of recognition from the company for his successful accomplishment. At the conclusion of this work several years later, Richard used his time and energy to work with, and provide assistance to his Mother's trucking business as well as to his brother Daniel's trucking business.

Richard was also able to dedicate more time to the growing family he so greatly loved. Thus, he was able to assist in the care, nurturing and upbringing of Joyce's (Ralph) daughter Kathryn, and Charles' (Tracy) daughter Ashlee. Richard was truly thrilled with the arrival of Kathy's (Isaac) children; Isaac, Gloria and Jacob (called "Duke" by Richard) and he truly dedicated himself to their care and well being.

At the onset of Gloria's severe illness, Richard never left her side and he, as well as Joyce, provided Gloria with constant care until she passed in September 2002. Richard Jr. passed in 2011 and after the tragic loss of Kathy in 2012, Richard and Joyce were hurt beyond measure. Nevertheless, they endured and became the primary guardians of the children; providing them with a loving, protective and stable home environment. Richard walked them to school in the morning, prepared evening meals and if necessary, provided a little Marine Corps discipline.

Richard had many talents, avocations and interests. He had a great interest in current events and politics and was well informed and well versed on a wide array of national and international subjects and events. Any visitor to his home could see the workmanship and pride he took in the numerous home improvement projects he completed over the years. His plush and highly manicured lawn could be used in a football stadium and he grew as many greens, tomatoes and string beans in his garden as Stater Bros has in their vegetable department. Richard loved computers and all high-tech gadgets. Through study and trial & error persistence, he became very proficient at many computer applications. A few years ago, he installed a computer based camera surveillance system which allowed him to view the front and rear areas of his home while at home or away by PC or Smartphone. Most recently, following Joyce's lead, Richard acquired a tablet PDA, which gave him the wonderful opportunity to see and speak to his 3 great-grandchildren in New Zealand one more time by Google Hangouts.

Joyce would lovingly tease her Dad about his latest "toys" and he would pretend to be upset and respond by saying "oh, dag nabit Joyce". However, Richard lovingly told all family and friends how much they meant to one another and how, together, they had endured and supported each other through the losses of Gloria, Richard Jr. and Kathy.

Richard loved and respected the Lord and his church. His public presence, poise and dignity led to him being called by his pastor at Allen Chapel AME, Riverside to serve on the Steward Board and also to be a church delegate to the Southern California Annual AME Conference and to the General Annual AME Conference in St. Louis.

Richard H. McKay had many worldly experiences, occupations, avocations and traveled extensively. More importantly, however, he loved the Lord and did his best to support and care for all members of his family with unconditional love and loyalty. His acts of love and service to family, friends and nation are too numerous to be counted. Richard lived a life that was truly the living embodiment of the motto of his beloved Marine Corps:

"Semper Fidelis"



Preceding Richard in death were his wife, Gloria; son, Richard Jr.; granddaughter, Kathryn Meza Sanchez; parents, Julius & Ida McKay; sister, Joyce McKay Abernathy; brother, Julius C. McKay and son-in-law, Ralph Meza.

Left to cherish his memory are his daughter, Joyce; son, Charles; granddaughter, Ashlee; great-grandson, Isaac Sanchez; great-granddaughter, Gloria Sanchez; great-grandson, Jacob Sanchez; brother, Gordon McKay; sister, Evelyn McKay Johnson; brother, Daniel McKay & Dorothy; brother & sister-in-law, Gerard & Glenda McKay and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, in-laws, friends, neighbors and the USMC.