

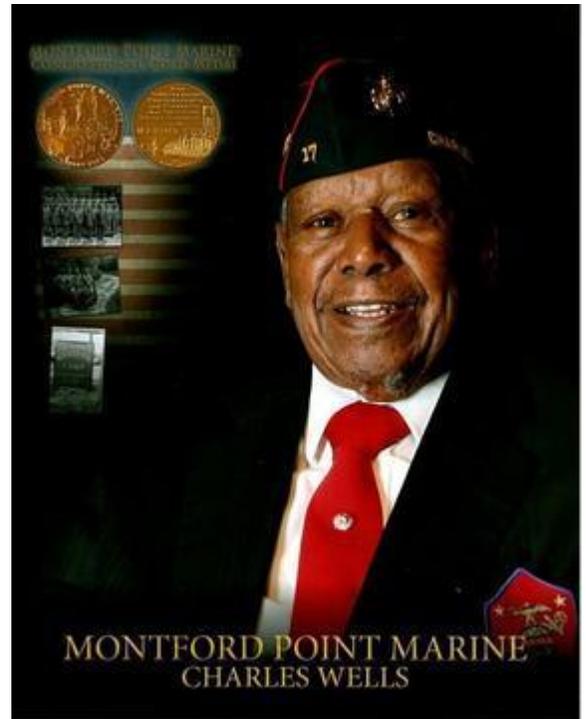


## Montford Point Marine Charles Nelson Wells

Printer, Church Leader Dies at 87

Charles Nelson Wells was born Jan. 10, 1926 in Baltimore, Md. His siblings, Lloyd E., Lillian Jones, and Ella welcomed Charles to the family as the youngest child of parents Anna Nelson Wells and Charles Elliott Wells.

A 1944 graduate of Frederick Douglass High School, Charles was an enterprising young man who helped his father with his vision to provide the “Negro community an access to the printed medium.” Under the tutelage of his dad, Charles became an apprentice at the Watkins and Wells Printers, a business his uncle Ernest started in 1922 in partnership with Marion Watkins. Later Charles worked in the trenches as printing consultant and designer to build the business, together with his brother Lloyd and other family members who also joined the staff. However, one of the most loyal, dedicated, and supportive employees was Barbara Wells Childs. In 1955, with mutual consent, Wells separated from Watkins and formed Wells Printers. The new enterprise grew to become a key business within the Black community. In 1982, Charles became the chief executive officer (CEO), where he continued in this capacity until his retirement in 2000 after more than 60 years in the printing business.



Charles was discovered by the love of his life, the beautiful Margaret Beatrice Sewell, in 1943, while he was sitting on his front steps as she skated by. The two courted briefly before Charles was drafted into the United States Marine Corps. He did his basic training at the segregated Montford Point, North Carolina Marine base in 1944, after which he served in the Pacific Theatre and Occupational Forces of Japan. Charles corresponded with Margaret through letters and on one Mother’s Day, Charles, the charmer, wired flowers to Margaret and her mother from overseas. In 1946, Charles was honorably discharged and returned home to the waiting arms of his sweetheart. They were married on Nov. 15, 1947. Shortly thereafter, the two moved into the home of Margaret’s parents, the Rev. Walter and Mrs. Margaret Sewell where they made their love nest for six years until moving into their own home at 2931 Belmont Ave. Later, Charles whisked Margaret off to the suburbs where they made a cozy abode in Lochearn.

Over the years Charles and Margaret opened their home to countless friends and family members. Their home has been a comfortable dwelling place as they lovingly cared for Charles’ mother, Miss Anna for 21 years; Mrs. Nottingham for 23 years and Margaret’s mother for eight years. In addition to the care of seniors, Charles and Margaret have been actively involved in the lives of five godchildren: Robin Satchell, Freida Thomas, Larry Sewell, Daryl Queen and Nicole Fields.

The Sunday before he married Margaret in 1947, Charles joined Mt. Zion United Methodist Church.

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Since that time, Charles and Margaret have worshipped together at Mt. Zion where he served in many capacities as lay leader, lay delegate to the Annual Conference, chairman of finance, chairman of the administrative board, Trustee, member of the Male Chorale, a member of the United Methodist Men and church historian.

In 1956, when the Rev. John J. Barnes died suddenly, Charles assumed administrative responsibilities of keeping the congregation in tact until a new pastor could be appointed. Under his leadership, Mt. Zion experienced a growth in membership and the mortgage was greatly reduced. Church activities were the focal point of Charles' life and served as the source of his spiritual strength and growth in Christian personhood.

Charles had the gift of gab even as a youth as he was the second place winner of a Declamation Contest in 1941 at Harvey Johnson Junior High School when he spoke from the topic, "Noah Built an Ark." It was certain that one never had to guess about how Charles Wells felt about any subject. He always gave his opinion – whether you wanted to hear it or not. A man of many talents and hobbies, Charles could often be overheard springing one-liners on a friend or associate. In addition to cajoling and teasing, he enjoyed traveling to many cities in the United States, and to the Bahamas, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Hawaii (three times), Panama Canal, Alaska, Caribbean Islands, and Canada. He also enjoyed reading, listening to music, playing dominoes and pinochle and of course, singing. At any given moment he was known to break out in song, especially singing his own rendition of his favorite - "Memories."

Over the years, Charles was active in the community as a member of the Morning Star Lodge No. 44 of the Prince Hall Masons; a Life Member of the NAACP; a lifetime member of the Forest Park Senior Center; a board member of the Lochearn Improvement Association and the Morgan State University Christian Center; a member of the Montford Point Marine Association; and a mentor and partner with Hilton Elementary and Marshburn Elementary Schools. He was the recipient of many awards and honors including many awards from Mt. Zion United Methodist Church and other churches and religious organizations; the NAACP Diamond Jubilee Award; and the Fullwood Foundation Benefit Recognition. One his most memorable and greatest honors was receiving the Congressional Gold Medal, the nation's highest civilian honor. It was presented to him on June 27, 2012 in Washington, DC for being a member of the Montford Point Marines, the first Black recruits accepted into the Corps. It was this honor for which he received great notoriety from the print, television and radio media.

Charles departed this life on Tuesday, Feb. 12, but his legacy will live on in the memory of his family, his church, his community and his many friends. He is survived by his devoted wife Margaret; brothers-in-law, Eugene, William and Rev. Ernest Maurice Sewell; sisters-in-law, Mary Allen, Jessie Thomas, Elaine and the Rev. Brenda Sewell; godchildren, a host of nieces, nephews, and other relatives and friends.

A home-going service will be held Feb 18 beginning at 10 a.m. with a wake, followed by the funeral at 11 a.m. at Mt Zion United Methodist Church, 3050 Liberty Heights Ave., Baltimore, Md. The viewing will be held Feb. 17, 2- 8 p.m.at the Vaughn C. Greene Funeral Home, 8728 Liberty Road, Randallstown, Md.

In lieu of flowers, please make contributions to the Charles N. Wells Memorial Fund, Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, 3050 Liberty Heights Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21215.

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