Celebrating the Life of



Henry Lee Bethley

Sunrise
February 25, 1941

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Sunset
June 10, 2025

Saturday, June 21, 2025

Celebration of Life

Elder Louis Johnson, Officiating

St. Paul United Methodist Church
215 E. 5th Street
Hattiesburg, MS 39401

Interment

Highland Park Cemetery
3401 W. 7th Street
Hattiesburg, MS 39401

Repast

Jackie Dole Sherril Community Center
220 W. Front Street
Hattiesburg, MS 39401

Services Entrusted

J & M Funeral Home
732 Dixie Avenue
Mendenhall, MS 39114
601-847-2911

Order of Service

Henry Lee Bethley

GATHERING ..... Elder Lewis Johnson

WORDS OF GRACE ..... Elder Johnson

GREETING ..... Elder Johnson

MUSICAL WITNESS ..... "*How Excellent*" — St. Paul Choir

PRAYER ..... Rev. Victoria Sizemore Baldwin

SCRIPTURE READING ..... Rev. Sizemore Baldwin

Old Testament	Isaiah 40:28-31
The Psalm	Psalm 23
New Testament	Revelation 21:1-7
The Gospel	John 14:1-7

MUSICAL WITNESS ..... "*I'll Fly Away*" — St. Paul Choir
with Guest Soloist Lyntonia Lindsey

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... Jimmie Jones

MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION

MUSICAL WITNESS ..... "*Anchored in the Lord*" — St. Paul Choir

EULOGY ..... Elder Johnson

BENEDICTION

RECESSIONAL ..... "*Oh, Happy Day*"

Obituary

Henry Lee Bethley

Henry Lee Bethley, affectionately known as "Buck," passed away peacefully at his home in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, on June 10, 2025. He was well known for his warm smile; his love of golf, history, and mentoring children; and his steadfast commitment to community service.

Born on February 25, 1941, in Canton, Mississippi, Henry was the fourth of six children born to H.M. Bethley and Ruby May Bethley. At an early age, he united with the Topisaw Baptist Church in Ruth, Mississippi. After the Bethley family relocated to Hattiesburg, he became a member of Friendship Baptist Church. He later joined St. Paul United Methodist Church where he served faithfully in various leadership roles, including Chairman of the Administrative Board, Trustee Board, United Methodist Men, Nominations Committee, and as a Sunday School Teacher. Buck enjoyed his time eating and traveling with the St. Paul Senior Adults. He was also honored to be a St. Paul "Priceless Pearls" which recognized the senior members of the church.

Henry graduated from Rowan High School in 1959 and attended Alcorn A & M College from 1959 to 1960. In 1961, he was drafted into the United States Air Force, serving honorably for eight years as an Enlisted Helicopter Flight Engineer. During his service, he survived two helicopter crashes and was honorably discharged in October 1968. Upon returning to Hattiesburg, Buck made history in 1969 as the third African-American hired at the Gulf Oil Refinery in Purvis, Mississippi.

In 1969, he reconnected with a lady friend that he often called "*Hello Beautiful*" and on November 14, 1969, he and Leliar Ann Williams were married. They taught their children to put God first, love your family, pursue a higher education, visit the sick and shut-in, and give back to the community. Buck was especially proud of his children and grandchildren.

After over a 30 year plus career at Amerada Hess (later renamed Hess Corporation), Henry retired from Hess before it was purchased by TransMontaigne. Henry was subsequently hired by TransMontaigne as a Supervisor at their Roswell, Georgia headquarters; he and Lee Ann resided in Alpharetta, Georgia until his second retirement in 2004.

Henry was a dedicated community leader and advocate. He was honored as Hattiesburg's 2014 Veteran of the Year and was very proud to be selected. His extensive community service included active membership in the Hub City Business and Professional Men's Club which supported the Henry McFarlin organization that played a pivotal role in changing the City of Hattiesburg's government structure from a Mayor/Commissioner format to a Mayor/Council system. This transformation led to the historic election of two Black city councilmen,

a Justice Court Judge, and a Mississippi State Representative. Henry was also co-founder of the First Tee of Hattiesburg where he served as Program Director and a golf instructor; Chairman of the Board of Directors at Edward Street Fellowship Center where he devoted volunteer hours at their Food Pantry. He also served as a Board Member of the African-American Military History Museum Committee, Chairman of the EUROHA Golf Committee, and Board Member for the Generations Strong Commemorative Wall in Hattiesburg.

Henry departed this life on June 10th, and went to be with his Father in Heaven. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Leliar Ann Williams Bethley; son, Lollis Bethley; parents, H. M. Bethley and Ruby May Bethley; siblings, Mary, Louis, Sherlene, and Velter Bethley.

Henry leaves to cherish his memory his devoted children: Owinda (Craig) Marchbanks of Chicago, Illinois, Lordeas Bethley of College Park, Maryland, Saundra Gail Bethley of Chicago, Illinois, and Brandon P. Bethley of Hattiesburg; adored grandchildren: Lauren (Joseph) James, Matthew Marchbanks, Joshua Marchbanks, and Brandon M. Bethley; great-grandchildren: Joey and Jasmaine James; sister: Lillie Bethley Young; devoted nephew: Michael Bethley; sister-in-law: Saundra W. Blackman; brothers-in-law: Clarence P. (Joyce) Williams and Randall L. Williams; Godchildren: Harris (Trina) Washington, Alecia Smith (Robert) Owens, Arlisa Silas Woody, Sydney Woody, Chris Barnes, Ariel Barnes Brown, Candace Blake Hall, and Cherodie Cannon, and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, friends and mentees.

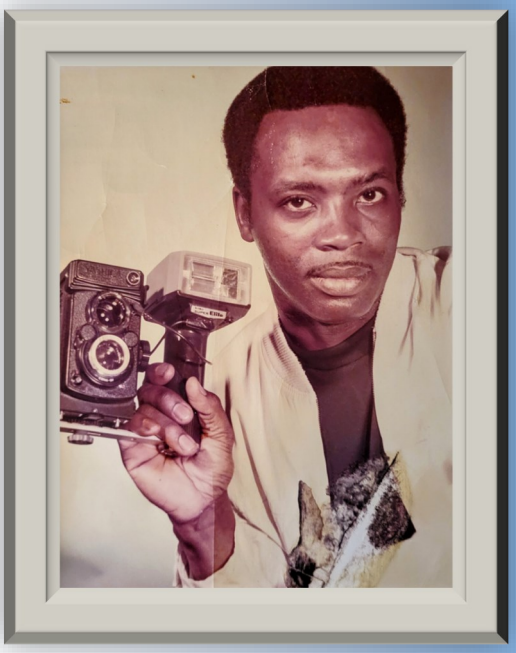
Henry “Buck” Bethley’s life was a testimony of love, service, and faith. His legacy will continue to inspire all who knew him.

Special Recognition of Henry’s Beloved Organizations

Rowan High School Class of 1959
St. Paul United Methodist Men
St. Paul UMC Sunday School
Boy Scouts Troop 411
EUROHA
(Eureka • Royal Street • Rowan • Hattiesburg)
Edward Street Fellowship Center
The First Tee of Hattiesburg / the Pine Belt
Alcorn State University National Alumni Association
African-American Military History Museum
Generations Strong Commemorative Wall

Henry "Buck" Bethley









From Thanatopsis

Thoughts About Death

"So live that when thy summons comes to
Join the innumerable caravan, which moves
To that mysterious realm, where each shall
Take his chamber in the silent halls of
Death, thou go not like the quarry slave at
Night, Scourged to his dungeon, but
sustained and soothed by an unfaltering
Trust, approach thy grave, like one who
Wraps the drapery of his couch about him,
And lies down to pleasant dreams."

William Cullen Bryant

Pallbearers

Brandon Atkins
Michael Bethley
Randy Hayes
Xavier Hill
Eric Boney
Harris Washington

Flower Bearers

St. Paul UMW and Family
Rowan High School Class of 1959
HHS Classes of 1984, 1986 & 1988
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Acknowledgements

Our family express our sincere gratitude to each of you for the many expressions of love, words and acts of kindness, and your prayers shown during Buck's illness and our time of bereavement. We pray that these words of gratitude will touch your hearts as your many acts of condolences have touched ours. It is our hope that you will keep Buck's legacy alive by embracing the qualities of love, friendship, and service that he exemplified as you move forward through life.

We are especially grateful to Buck's lifelong friends and companions who stood by him throughout his life. Your presence and continued support are a true testament to the bonds he treasured so deeply — Class of 1959 special classmates: Johnnie Sims, Nina Smith, Raylawni Branch, James Reed, Willie Horne, Oliver Brown, Billy Earl Knight, Fletcher Williams, and Arthur James; The Poker Players Club and Golfing Buddies: Wes McGee, Prince Woullard, James Williamson and Leon Walker. Mr. James Fluker, who he affectionately called "My Deacon" and special friend, Maxine Perkins.

A special thank you to family and friends who stood in the gap to help and assist with Buck: Evelyn Blade, Michael Bethley, Randall Williams, Charles and Dorothy Killingsworth, and the Fabulous Five (Ariel Barnes, Sheri Siggers-Boney, Dareyl Vaughn, and Arlisa Woody).

Thank you to his care team who went beyond the call of duty — Care Taker: Christi Donaldson; Nurses - Dalriana Mikell and Jasmine Hardy; Physical Therapists - Chelsea L. Kichens, Jessica M. Craft and Robert "Bobby" Hanson.

Thank you to his physicians and their staffs, especially Dr. Rochelle Hopkins, Dr. David Morris, Dr. Jamie Sisk, Dr. Brian Trussel, and Dr. Charles Hernandez; Forrest General Hospital, the Veterans Administrative Hospital, Enhabit Home Health, and Senior Helpers.