

Acknowledgements

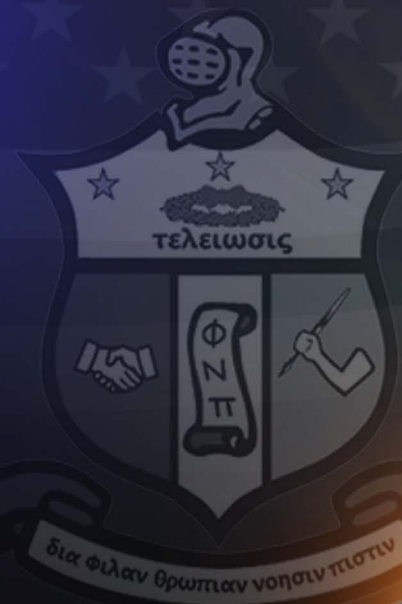
The Wright family would like to thank everyone that came to celebrate the victorious life of Gerald Wayne Wright. We are so grateful for your prayers, heartfelt words, tokens of love, and most important, your presence. You have lifted our spirits during the darkest time of our lives, and we appreciate each one of you.
May God continue to bless and keep you.

Lovingly submitted,
The Wright Family



THE FERGUSON-RAYAM FUNERAL HOME

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Remembering GERALD WAYNE WRIGHT

SEPTEMBER 21, 1946 ~ JULY 13, 2023

Friday, August 18, 2023 | 10:00 AM
The Perfecting Church
274 Delsea Dr., Sewell, NJ 08080
Elder Michael Dixon, Officiating
Pastor Kevin Brown, Eulogist

ORDER OF Service

Opening Selection.....Perfecting Worship
Officiant.....Elder Michael Dixon
Prayers of Comfort.....Elder Lee Malloy

Old and New Testament Scripture

Elder Lee Malloy

Musical Selection.....Jerry's Jazz Medley
Reflections.....Juanita Wright and Dr. Isaiah Abney

Acknowledgements and Reading of the Obituary

Mika Highsmith-Hasan

Musical Selection.....Perfecting Worship
Eulogy/Benediction.....Pastor Kevin Brown
Recession Song.....“Don’t you worry about a thing” Stevie Wonder



GERALD’S FAVORITE SONG

Here’s to Life

No complaints and no regrets
I still believe in chasing dreams and placing bets
But I had learned that all you give is all you get
So give it all you got
I had my share
I drank my fill
And even though I’m satisfied
I’m hungry still
To see what’s down another road beyond the hill
And do it all again
So Here’s to life
And every joy it brings
So Here’s to life
To dreamers and their dreams
Funny how the time just flies
How love can go from warm hellos
To sad goodbyes
And leave you with the memories you’ve memorized
To keep your winters warm
For there’s no yes in yesterday
And who knows what tomorrow brings or takes away
As long as I’m still in the game
I want to play
For laughs for life for love
So Here’s to life
And every joy it brings
Here’s to life
For dreamers and their dreams
May all your storms be weathered
And all that’s good get better
Here’s to life

Here’s to love
Here’s to you
May all your storms be weathered
And all that’s good get better
Here’s to life
Here’s to love
Here’s to you



The Story of GERALD WAYNE WRIGHT

SEPTEMBER 21, 1946 ~ JULY 13, 2023

Miles Davis said, for me, music and life are all about style; and no quote is more perfect than this to describe the astonishing and the successful life led by Gerald Wayne Wright. On July 13, 2023, in Philadelphia, PA, a man of distinction, humility, and grace transitioned from this life and now IS peacefully residing in Heaven.

Born on September 21, 1946, in Philadelphia, PA, Gerald was the ninth child of Percy Edward Wright, Sr and Ida Mae Wright. Gerald had eleven siblings; he grew up with seven sisters, four of whom predeceased him (Jean Wright-Richardson, Alberta Wright, Norma Wright-Crawford, and Carmela Wright) and he enjoyed a special bond with his younger sisters, (Diane Wright-Collins, Juanita Wright, and Sharon Wright). Gerald had four brothers all of whom predeceased him (Everett Wright, Frederick Wright, Percy Wright, Jr, and Donald Wright). Gerald held fond memories of things learned from each of his predeceased siblings. Gerald, being the youngest of five sons was the apple of his mother's eye. Often Gerald would comment that while his sisters did chores on Saturdays, he was allowed to play Cowboys and Indians in the backyard without distraction!

The Wright family mantra was God and faith. Connectedness was a strong value of the Wrights, and their home was filled with love, music, and laughter. The Wrights hailed from the Germantown section of Philadelphia; a neighborhood known as The Brickyard. Being such a large family, everyone in The Brickyard knew the Wrights. The Wrights were infamous for never meeting a stranger, always inviting friends to gather for spirited cocktails, and sharing delicious home cooked meals. The Wrights always hosted great parties and created strong holiday traditions that has spanned generations.

Gerald enjoyed an adventurous childhood and was a natural athlete. He was a member of the Germantown Boys and Girls Club (a gift given by his friend Isaiah Abney's father). Gerald said that the gift of membership to the club exposed him to many sports. Gerald played baseball, basketball, and football. However, Gerald's favorite sport to play was soccer. While in high school, Gerald made the varsity soccer team and became one of the highest scorers in the city!

Gerald was educated in the public school system of Philadelphia, PA. A graduate of the Class of 1964 from Germantown High School. As a 15-year-old sophomore, Gerald met a 14-year-old freshman named Clara Wright. The meeting of these two would be a love that would last a lifetime. On September 13, 1969, the two entered Holy Matrimony. Gerald and Clara were the "it" couple, he was fine, and she was gorgeous! Both evoked a wild sense of humor, had iconic style, and embodied the most generous hearts with the kindest and most authentic spirits. For 62 years Gerald and Clara built an empire of love that not only benefitted their daughters and granddaughters, but was extended to family, friends, and so many more. Gerald and Clara were hard workers, they had similar passions around family and climbing the ladder of success. They grew from high school sweethearts to husband and wife, who shared 53 years of marriage. Gerald lived out his vow in sickness and in health, as he was the ultimate care giver to Clara as she fell ill to dementia. Gerald never gave up on his greatest love and was there for her until the day he was called home to be with the Lord. The marriage of Gerald and Clara will be inscribed in the book of life as the greatest love story ever told! As in any marriage there were times of struggle, when they didn't see things eye to eye, however, they had the maturation to lean on their vows of staying committed to one another. The love they shared was no ordinary love, it is a tangible example of the unconditional love that our Heavenly Father has for each one of us.

After graduating from high school, Gerald was drafted into the army during the Vietnam War. Gerald completed basic training at Fort Jackson in South Carolina. When reflecting on his military service, Gerald would often state being drafted ultimately changed the trajectory of his life. He met men from all over the country that inspired him, helped him craft goals, and motivated him to dream big! After training, Gerald was sent to Asmara, Ethiopia and spent 2 and a half years working in their communication department. While in Ethiopia, Gerald immersed himself in the culture, developed lasting bonds, and was nicknamed, "Rags" because he tied his hair down at night. Even in the army, Gerald made sure his signature coiffure was done right! Clara would often joke that Gerald's hair was dyed, fried, and tied! Gerald was always so serious about his appearance, and his hair was no different. It is said that Gerald quit the varsity soccer team abruptly in high school and when asked why he quit, he told a friend, "Man, I'm sweating my hair out too much, so I had to give it up!"

In 1970, Gerald and Clara started their family with the birth of their first daughter, Danielle Monique. Shortly after Danielle was born, the family moved to Willingboro, NJ. While living in Willingboro, Gerald became a suburbanite using his Saturdays to wash his car, mow the lawn, and learn how to grill the perfect steak. In 1977, the family grew with the birth of Melissa Dionne. Gerald loved his girls and showed it every day with the simple phrase, I love you. All through their lives, Danielle and Melissa would enjoy "Dad Dates" which included dinner and a movie, going to the ballet or a Broadway show, attending a Philadelphia sporting event, or visiting a museum. On Valentine's Day, Gerald would send his daughters flowers and he would always sign any correspondence he gave to them, Love you madly, Dad.

The most incredible gift that Gerald gave to his daughters were the conversations he had with them. The trio were not just father and daughters, but they were friends! Gerald would often tell them how smart, beautiful, and accomplished they were; he was very proud to be their dad. Gerald loved that Melissa was like him in being an entrepreneur, a lover of culture, and that she enjoyed city life. He marveled at Danielle's passion for African American history and the genealogical research she collected on their ancestral heritage. He also liked that Danielle was organized and was an avid reader like him. However, the greatest of all that he loved about his girls was their love for Philadelphia sports! On Sundays the three would gather to watch their beloved Philadelphia Eagles or if not together, would send text messages or share phone calls over their collective joy or sorrow (mostly sorrow) about the team's loss or victory. Gerald would say, "I never would have thought that my daughters would grow to be real Eagles fans, this is incredible!"

Gerald's "Girl Dad" title followed him when he proudly became a Papa in 2013 with the birth of his first granddaughter, Gabriella Elizabeth. When Gabriella was born, he and Clara became the ultimate Papa and Gigi. Both enjoyed watching Gabriella grow and even though Clara's health was declining, Gerald made sure that Clara was present at all of Gabriella's events, they attended Grandparents Day at her school, went to swim lessons, dance recitals and made sure she had anything she desired. In 2021, with the birth of their second granddaughter, Zara Melissa-Grace, Gerald was convinced that he was the luckiest man on this earth by being surrounded by girls. Gerald made up signature songs for both granddaughters. Zara's song was sung around the world with her father's family being from Turkey; Facetime visits happened frequently between Gerald and Zara's family. The largely non-English speaking Turks when they saw Gerald would belt out Zara's song: You're a star! You're a star! All the world loves a star! Gerald would hear this and would let out his classic gut felt laugh. Gerald's laugh was so infectious, it made everyone around him feel his joy, adoration, and excitement that he coined a song for all to relish.

Gerald's title of being the ultimate father and greatest Papa, also extends to being an outstanding provider for his family. While developing into the professional, Gerald became "Jerry" along the way. Gerald was the ultimate businessman, he was articulate, intelligent, and had the innate ability of being an entrepreneur. Gerald worked at Sun Oil Company and attended Rutgers University at night. In 1985, Gerald was laid off after 15 years of service to Sun Oil Company. A go-getter with a courageous spirit, Gerald saw this lay-off as a time to start his own enterprise; he knew that God had a greater calling for his career. Soon Lamont McClean, a colleague from Sun and a friend, asked Gerald to lunch. During this lunch, Lamont asked Gerald if he wanted to start a business together. Through the impeccable timing of God, Universal Technical Resource Services (UTRS) was born. Together Gerald and Lamont poured everything into the business—every financial resource, their wives by their side, and their faith that every step was ordained by God solidified the positive launch of UTRS.

UTRS grew from a small minority-owned business to the multi-million-dollar company it is today. In the 1990's Gerald and Lamont added a third partner to the business, Albert Zalcmann. As a team, Gerald, Lamont, and Albert made UTRS into the formidable and elite Government Contracting business it is today. The legacy of UTRS will forever be associated with Gerald and his astute acumen for business. Thirty-seven years of Gerald's professional life was spent in making UTRS a prosperous business. Gerald would often reminisce that his first job as a paper boy and collecting soda cans established his passion for entrepreneurship. Gerald rose from working in a factory after high school to being at the top echelon of his field. Gerald was featured on several magazine covers, like Black Enterprise, he appeared in articles in the Philadelphia Inquirer, and participated in interviews conducted by CNN. Additionally, Gerald accepted countless awards, gave several keynote addresses, became a member of several boards, including the Settlement Music School and Fox Chase Cancer Center. One of Gerald's greatest achievements was being invited to have lunch in the White House with the first African American President, Barack Obama!

On July 1, 2022, after working for over 66 years of his life, Gerald officially retired. Gerald did not wait until retirement to enjoy life. Gerald embodied the spirit of a renaissance man; he was the consummate lover of the finest things this world could offer. Gerald enjoyed expensive cuisine and would frequent the best restaurants, but he also could burn in the kitchen as well. Gerald would plate a meal that looked like a professional chef made it. Gerald loved to watch cooking shows to perfect his culinary hobby. Gerald was also well traveled, visiting Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. Gerald's last trip was to Istanbul. While in Turkey Gerald met the family of his son-in-law, Ferhat Aslan. The trip to Turkey provided Gerald with so much joy!

Gerald was a music connoisseur, he loved so many different genres, but jazz was his favorite with Miles Davis being his most beloved artist. Gerald loved that his daughters married men that equally enjoyed things he liked such as music and sports. Gerald would often joke that his daughters both married foreigners, one from Turkey and the other from North Jersey! Gerald was an avid movie watcher, and enjoyed watching television, and documentaries. When watching something he really loved, he would often call a friend or his daughters and recount the show word for word. This, of course would ultimately ruin the show that he was endorsing for people to watch! Additionally, Gerald was the number one Philly sports fan. He never gave up on his teams—Phillies, Sixers, or Eagles. If the team was down, his famous reply would be, "it's still early, they will come back!"

Gerald, a lifetime learner, accomplished many things when it came to his educational pursuits, including finishing his bachelor's at Rutgers University in Political Science, and completing certificate programs at Temple University, and Dartmouth College. Additionally, Gerald became a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. Gerald's line was entitled the, "The Talented Tenth," and would provide him with friendship and fellowship. Gerald's line name was "The Godfather" and this was something he loved, especially since the Godfather was his favorite movie franchise.

Gerald curated his life with impeccable style, he housed the warmest spirit, and he never let his appetite for success get in the way of being helpful to others. Gerald's superpower was optimism, he was a glass half empty type of guy! The last months of Gerald's life was filled on creating a living testimony for his daughter, Melissa. Melissa predeceased Gerald in 2020. Gerald created an endowed scholarship in the name of Melissa at her beloved Alma Mater, The George Washington University. In June 2023, the Melissa Wright-Aslan Scholarship was established and will go on in perpetuity. The scholarship was Gerald's last earthly gift of love to honor the life and the legacy of his youngest daughter.

For Seventy-six years Gerald enhanced this planet and his family, his friends, and colleagues will enormously miss his presence. Gerald's life inspired us! His fortitude, his zest for life, and his knowledge of so many things will never leave our hearts or our conscience. We are humbled to have been loved by him. Our hearts are broken, simply because we loved him! There are many left to mourn the wonderful legacy of Gerald this includes, his wife, Clara Wright, his daughter,

Danielle Wright-Fennell, his two son-in-law's, Patrick Fennell and Ferhat Aslan, and his grandchildren, bonus grandson, Miles Fennell and his granddaughters, Gabriella Fennell, and Zara Aslan. Gerald will also be missed by his sisters: Diane Wright Collins, Juanita Wright, and Sharon Wright. Gerald leaves behind two sisters-in-laws, Faridah Abdul-Karim, Dorothea Todd, and brother-in-law, Richard Todd. Gerald's four godchildren, Anthony "Tony" Houston, Richelle Todd-Yamoah, Nadja Wright, and Camille Corsey will miss him. Gerald's endearing friends, Dr. Isaiah Abney, Bobby Baines, Bill Ellis, Raymond Friend, Charles Highsmith, Muriel Horne, Ted Horne, Edgar Houston, Elbridge James, Mike White, Ed Willis, and Gary Wright will always cherish his memory. Finally, Gerald leaves to mourn nieces, nephews, cousins, and a host of friends.

