



W. D. CROWDER FUNERAL HOME

1800 John L. Patterson Street

Springfield, Tennessee 37172

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ARRANGEMENTS: VIEWING AND VISITATION, SATURDAY, JULY 30, 2022, 3-6 PM AT GREATER SOUTH BAPTIST CHURCH, 2015 JOHN L. PATTERSON STREET, SPRINGFIELD, TENNESSEE 37172 AND SUNDAY, JULY 31, 2022, 2-3 PM WITH FUNERAL TO FOLLOW AT 3 PM AT SPRINGFIELD CIVIC CENTER 401 N MAIN STREET, SPRINGFIELD, TENNESSEE; INTERMENT RESTLAWN MEMORIAL GARDEN.

Deacon, Willie Richard Gardner, Jr. entered this life on October 12, 1952 and transitioned to be with the Lord on July 21, 2022. He was born to the late Willie R. Gardner, Sr., and the late Lovie Mae Darden Gardner.

Willie was baptized at the age of seven at Greater South Baptist Church under the leadership of Reverend W.D. Crowder. He was in the Youth Choir, Sunday School, and was a member of the Jr. Deacon Board. As an adult he became a devoted Deacon under the leadership of Pastor Samuel Stratton. His favorite Church song was "I Want To Be At The Meeting," sung by the late Frank Dowlen.

Willie "FLY," "Bubba" grew up in Springfield, Tennessee where he graduated from Springfield High School with the Class of 1971. After high school he attended the Institute of Electronic Technology in Paducah, Kentucky. He left early because he was hired at Ford Motor Company. The company's name changed to Carlex Glass America, LLC. Willie was a Float Technician for fifty years. He was ranked the 2nd man at the plant with seniority. For many years his co-workers came to him for advice, like he was a lawyer, which he could have been.

Willie was well known by seventeen different names and nicknames. He was always the life of the party and always started the "Soul Train" line at his Class Reunions. Everybody always wanted him to come to their parties.

Willie was in several different organizations during his lifetime. He was devoted and was involved in so many. Some of them were: Legal Aid Assistance in Clarksville, TN, NAACP member, Springfield Branch, Boy Scouts of America as a Scout Master, Troop # 475 for many years, Springfield Jr. Pro Football League, area organizer and head coach for two teams -the Bears and The Raiders. His friend, Ronnie Baptiste and the late Ronnie Summers was his Assistant Coaches. Both teams were undefeated during the same years. For many years he was on the Board of Nashville Jr. Pro Football League. He was his brother, Kenneth, first football coach when he first got started playing the sport. He was a member of the Springfield Athletic Club, Assistant Coach of Springfield Jr. Pro Baseball Team, the Yankees, under the leadership of Head Coach, Mr. Lewis Jamison; Willie was one of three people responsible for getting Martin Luther King Jr. Pro Football field in Springfield. For thirty-six years, he was a devoted president of the Gardner's Family Reunion. He was a very good person that never met a stranger. He always made time to talk and meet people and will be truly missed by everyone.

His hobbies were fishing, hunting, deep sea fishing, bowling, dancing, especially to his favorite song, "The Atomic Dog." He went crazy when that song came on.

He loved traveling, watching Westerns, MSNBC, CNN, C-Span. He also loved talking on the CB. His CB Handle was, "Space Mouse." He liked reading Western books, and was very good at playing cards, watching his favorite football team, the Dallas Cowboys, and watching his favorite basketball team, the LA Lakers. He also enjoyed listening to his favorite singing group, The Temptations, (he really thought he was a member of the group). He was taught how to Barbeque by the late, Mr. Sam Chatman. He loved sweets but his favorite dessert was chocolate cakes. He always loved watching and collecting model trains..

"Fly" and his best friends, Wayne Goodner and the late James Snorten, started their own group, "The Sophisticated Gents." He and his friend, Mr. Willie "Tiny" Chatman worked on cars together, in the basement all the time. He watched and did a whole lot of talking, he didn't work on cars. He was a very smart person. He learned how to drive a car at nine years old, and could drive by himself. As an adult, he would give anybody a ride. He loved, cared, gave, shared, helped and was there for everybody. At Christmas, he was Santa Clause. He would give gifts, then run around and give money in envelopes to the same person, and, if anybody came on that day, he would give them a money envelope also. To all his nieces and nephews, he was the \$5.00 man for many years. He gave all of them their nicknames, even children on all of his sport teams. He lived his life and never had a dull moment, he was a happy person.

Willie was preceded in death along with is parents; two sisters, Mrs. Shirley Bradley and Mrs. Brenda Hicks and her husband, Donald; three brothers, Jeffery, Kenneth and Reginald Gardner; three nephews, Vincent, Dimitri and Bryant.

Willie leaves to cherish his memories: his very devoted wife of fifty years and best friend, Carlene Malone Gardner; together they had four children: Laquanda, Torvis (Joyce), Marcus and Tandra Gardner; six grandchildren, MarNisha, Torrez, Dominick, Aayliaya, Elijah Gardner, Trynitee Gardner; two step grandchildren, Caleb and Brieona; one great-granddaughter, Miyah Osborne; foster granddaughter, Aliahna Carr and her son, Ayden Carr; two sisters, Mrs. Beverly Bradley (Edward Sr.) and Mrs. Kimberly Johnson (David Sr.); one uncle, Ronnie Tucker; two brothers-in-law, Benny Bradley, Anthony Malone; sisters-in-law, Candy Gardner, Deborah Gardner, Yvonne Greenidge, Valerie Hyde, Debbie Malone, Patricia Malone; a host of other family and friends.