



Willie Benson Jr

April 28, 1964 - March 19, 2020

Obituary for Willie 'Will' Edd Benson, Jr.

Willie Edd Benson, Jr (aka 'Will') unexpectedly moved from earth to paradise on March 19, 2020 at his home in Cleveland, Tennessee.

Will was born on April 28, 1964 to his parents, The Late Willie Edd Benson, Sr and Starlet Jean Ray Benson in Johnson City, Tennessee.

Will attended Johnson City Public Schools and quickly discovered his passion; music; and everything it had to offer.

Will began his musical journey under the direction of, and the tutelage of, then Band Director, Mr. Vincent Dial at North Side Elementary in Johnson City, Tennessee. Will continued his passion at the intermediate level in junior high, at Liberty Bell's Independence Hall, where he found himself often competing for 1st Chair Clarinet in both the Concert Band and in the Orchestra and usually winning the seat.

The highlight of his musical journey came when he was selected to be the First African American Drum Major for the Science Hill Hilltopper Marching Band from 1980 - 1982. Willie was the first African American to hold this position in upper East Tennessee throughout Southwest Virginia.

And he performed like no other during the half-time shows at the football games, many times under racial threats, yet focused on the task at hand.

Will sought higher education at East Tennessee State University where he also led the Buccaneer Marching Band in its half-time shows. Will graduated with a Bachelor in Music Education in 1986. While attending ETSU will became a member of the Music Fraternity, Phi Mu Alpha, of which he was extremely proud.

Will moved to Phoenix, Arizona and finished his educational journey, to receive his Master of Music Education. Will found his forever home at Cleveland State Community College in Cleveland, Tennessee. He accepted the position of Professor of Music at the College and was loved by his colleagues and the surrounding community.

During his residency in Cleveland, Will was a beloved member of several organizations: USBC, a few clogging teams, and the Elks Lodge just to name a few. He was heavily involved in various charitable causes to benefit people, no matter their age, race or social status, he just loved people.

Will was a devoted member of his church, Grace Episcopal Church of Chattanooga, TN where he was a part of the choir. And he frequently attended St. Luke's Episcopal Church of Cleveland, Tennessee also where he was a designated server.

Willie E. Benson, Jr. was preceded in death by his Father, Willie Edd Benson, Sr.; Two Special Grandmothers, Lydia B. Benson and Mary Elizabeth(Granna)Muston; one Aunt, Beverly A. Benson; and one Special Great-Uncle, John H. Warren II.

He leaves to everlastingly ache over his passing: his mother-Starlet Jean

Benson Williams, Johnson City; sisters: Wjualana Benson, Johnson City; Hope(Bill)Tackett, Lutz, FL; Neoyshi(Charles)Johnson, Savannah, GA; brothers: Sean(Kristie)Benson, Fort Dix, NJ; John(Charlene)Jackson, Elizabethton, TN; great-aunt: Donna Mae Warren, Detroit, MI; two aunts: Lisa A. Jackson, Elizabethton, TN; Mary Elizabeth Benson, Sacramento, CA; one uncle: William(Nikita)Starnes, Nashville; 8 nephews: Ayston Benson, Darnell(Dakota)Jones, Detric Hancock, Devon Scott, Kristopher Tackett, John A. Jackson III, Sean J Benson II, Kristian Benson;4 nieces: Jackie(Cerrick)Bowers, Niyata Hancock, Jessica Johnson, Laniyah Jackson; his special great nephew and niece: Keenon amd Jaenai Clayton and the newest edition to the family, Draya Raeann Jones(born 7 days after his passing) He also leaves to mourn his passing a host of relatives and friends.

A Memorial Service to celebrate his life will be postponed until a later date. Condolences can be sent to his mother and family by email: wjualanabenson@gmail.com or at the residence of his mother.

The family of Willie Edd Benson Jr. will be receiving friends on Saturday, September 5th from 12:00pm to 2:00pm at the Langston Center located at 315 Elm St in Johnson City. There will be a private Memorial Service for the family to follow.

Masks are required to attend.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

SEP 5. 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

The Langston Centre
315 Elm St
Johnson City, TN 37601

Tribute Wall



“ *Willie Benson Jr*

January 29, 2023 at 10:28 PM



“ *I am so sad to learn of the passing of this great man. My heart goes out to his friends and family. He was my professor when I attended CSCC a while ago and was one of the few people who was able to push me to succeed. I stand now in success because of this man and as I was searching for him to express my gratitude I learned of this tragic truth. The world truly lost a beautiful man.*

Damion M - May 27, 2021 at 10:15 AM



“ *I am saddened to learn of Will's passing. I enjoyed sitting in front of Will in the choir at Grace Episcopal for several years. He was a very talented musician, and a friend to all. He will be sorely missed. Keeping his family in my prayers.*



Rosie Smith Whitaker - September 23, 2020 at 08:57 PM



“ *Karen Deakins lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Karen Deakins - September 23, 2020 at 12:36 PM

BL

“ I, sadly, have just heard of Willie's passing. I met him when working together in a production at JC Community Theatre and we became friends. Many nights I gave him a ride home where we had a chance to talk about many things. I was so proud of Willie's many accomplishments at SHHS, ETSU, and beyond. Our world lost a hugely talented young man. Prayers and blessings to his family and friends.

Betts Leach - September 03, 2020 at 12:21 PM

TB

“ Tammy Blake lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr



Tammy Blake - August 14, 2020 at 02:19 AM

 David Squibb

“ I am in shock. I just messaged Will on Facebook about the passing of my father, Don Squibb, who was a mentor to Will during his time in Johnson City, Tennessee. Will was an important person to our family and he brought great joy along with musical talent. Our hearts go out to Will's family and friends. —David Squibb

David Squibb - July 02, 2020 at 08:50 PM

RM

“ Will was the speaker at our graduation at Cleveland State community college. He always had a great smile and never had anything bad to say. We saw him out at karaoke, he will be missed by many of us.

Roy Martin - May 15, 2020 at 10:24 PM

MA

Will, I know we all grow up and our name take an adult sound to. I made sure mind. I hired an Attorney and had mine legally changed. There's the thing that will never forget is your childhood friends. Reast in peace and that I want to see you as quickly find you in!

Michael Netherton. (Harvey Acker((- July 26, 2020 at 07:18 PM

HA

“ *Harvey Acker lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Harvey Acker - April 28, 2020 at 03:55 PM

PC

“ *Paula Colston Cavin lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Paula Colston Cavin - April 25, 2020 at 01:11 AM

MA

“ *Mark Alexander lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Mark Alexander - April 23, 2020 at 11:39 AM

DG

“ *Darlene Goodlett lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Darlene Goodlett - April 12, 2020 at 04:14 PM

LB

“ *Lynn & Rayetta Bachman lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Lynn & Rayetta Bachman - April 07, 2020 at 05:09 PM

DG

“ *Debbie Grey sent a virtual gift in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Debbie Grey - April 06, 2020 at 10:29 AM

BD

“ *Brenda Davis lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Brenda Davis - April 01, 2020 at 04:06 PM

DD

“ *Delores Delaney lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Delores Delaney - March 31, 2020 at 11:40 AM

CR

“ *CLINTON&PAM ROLLINS lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



CLINTON&PAM ROLLINS - March 31, 2020 at 01:06 AM

 Mary Rollins

“ *Mary Rollins lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Mary Rollins - March 30, 2020 at 05:57 AM

LL

“ *Louis Locke lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Louis Locke - March 26, 2020 at 01:56 PM

VF

“ Vanessa Robinson & Family lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr



Vanessa Robinson & Family - March 26, 2020 at 11:51 AM

SB

“ Scott Barnette lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr



Scott Barnette - March 26, 2020 at 11:47 AM

BJ

“ Bobby J Ryans Jr lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr



Bobby J Ryans Jr - March 25, 2020 at 11:37 PM

MR

“ Maria Regalado lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr



Maria Regalado - March 25, 2020 at 09:59 PM



“ *William H. Hill Jr. lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



William H. Hill Jr. - March 25, 2020 at 03:50 PM

BS

“ *Buddy Stuart lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Buddy Stuart - March 25, 2020 at 09:50 AM

BS

“ *Buddy Stuary lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Buddy Stuary - March 25, 2020 at 09:47 AM

RS

“ *Robbie Stuart lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Robbie Stuart - March 24, 2020 at 12:26 PM

MF

“ *Marchelle/Nate Fields sent a virtual gift in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Marchelle/Nate Fields - March 23, 2020 at 02:34 PM



“ *Stanley and Donna Daniels*



Dona Daniels - March 23, 2020 at 06:27 AM

JC

“ *James And Brenda Charles*



James And Brenda Charles - March 22, 2020 at 07:11 PM

VP

“ *Viola Patton sent a virtual gift in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Viola patton - March 22, 2020 at 05:12 PM

JW

“ *Janice Wells sent a virtual gift in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Janice wells - March 22, 2020 at 12:57 PM

DD

“ *Delores Delaney lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Delores Delaney - March 22, 2020 at 11:20 AM



“ *Linda Workman sent a virtual gift in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Linda Workman - March 22, 2020 at 09:48 AM

NG

“ *Namcy Greenler lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Namcy Greenler - March 21, 2020 at 08:40 PM

CF

“ *Carla Forney lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Carla Forney - March 21, 2020 at 02:51 PM

CO

“ *You will be so missed. Praying for your family and extended family. Love you*



Cindy Ogle - March 21, 2020 at 01:46 PM



“ *Carolyn Fain lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Carolyn Fain - March 21, 2020 at 12:39 PM

PR

“ *Patria Rhea sent a virtual gift in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Patria Rhea - March 21, 2020 at 11:53 AM

KM

“ *Kathy Mills lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Kathy Mills - March 20, 2020 at 09:35 PM

PD

“ *Pauline Douglas lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Pauline Douglas - March 20, 2020 at 05:47 PM

MH

“ *Praying for the family during this time.*



Mary Jackson Harris - March 20, 2020 at 05:15 PM

FG

“ *Frank Gardner lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Frank Gardner - March 20, 2020 at 02:36 PM

SS

“ *Shelia Smith lit a candle in memory of Willie Benson Jr*



Shelia Smith - March 20, 2020 at 02:19 PM

RG

RIP My Friend You will be sorely Missed. Until we meet again in Glory.

Rick Goodwin - March 22, 2020 at 05:55 PM