



Thomas Leonard Smith

May 14, 1936 - January 17, 2022

BIOGRAPHY OF THOMAS LEONARD SMITH

Thomas Leonard Smith entered into Eternal Rest on Monday, January 17, 2022. Thomas was born in Asbury Park, New Jersey on May 14, 1936. He was the third of eight children born to his mother, Gertrude Elizabeth Saunders and Harold Saunders.

Thomas received his formative education in Kindergarten through eighth grade at Bangs Avenue Grammar School in Asbury Park, and was a 1954 graduate of Asbury Park High School. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physical Education from Delaware State College in 1958 where he was a member of the track team. He was a recipient of a Master of Science Degree in Recreation from the University of Iowa in 1965.

Thomas rendered service as an active-duty officer in the United States Armed Forces from 1958-1960. He was stationed in St. Nazair, France, where his duties included the supervision of the Independent American School. His military tenure in St. Nazair afforded him the opportunity to visit Paris, France and other neighboring French venues. He thereafter served in the Army Military Reserve Force and received an Honorable Discharge from the United States Army in 1964.

His professional experience constituted service as a physical education instructor and tennis coach at McKinley Technical High School in Washington, D. C. from 1965-1967. He subsequently engaged in twenty-eight years of professional teaching in Stamford, Connecticut as a physical education teacher at Belltown, Hart, Westover Elementary Schools, Cloonan and Dolan Middle Schools. In addition, his tenure in Stamford consisted of twenty-four years as the first African American Health and Physical Education teacher, basketball coach and tennis coach at Westhill High School in Stamford. He felt privileged and honored to have been the physical education instructor of the Mayor of the City of Stamford, and later the Governor of the state of Connecticut, Governor Dannel Malloy.

Among his adjunct professional activities was his involvement as a director and counselor for the Stamford Board of Recreation, the Horizons Summer Academic and Day Camp Program in New Canaan, Connecticut and the St. Luke's Episcopal Church Summer Program in Stamford.

Thomas was raised in a Christian home and indoctrinated with stalwart religious values. During his childhood and adolescence, he faithfully served as an acolyte at St. Augustine's Episcopal Church in Asbury Park. Thomas joined the fellowship of Union Baptist Church in Stamford in 1995 where he was a member of the Deacon, Men's Choir and Parking and Transportation Ministries. In addition, he enjoyed participating on Special Day committees and in Noonday Bible Study and the Vacation Bible School Ministry.

Thomas was a dedicated, loyal and supportive husband to his beloved wife of fifty years, Margaret Jackson Smith. To this union was born two sons, Carter Thomas and Mark Leonard.

His community service involvement included working as a volunteer at the former Strawberry Hill Healthcare Center in Norwalk, Connecticut. A member

of the residents' council there, he assisted in serving meals, transported residents to activities and delighted in conducting recreational programs. Thomas also consistently provided assistance and transportation to senior citizens throughout the Stamford area.

Thomas L. Smith was a Life Member of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated. An active member of this fraternity for sixty-five years, he was a Charter Member of the Stamford Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., founded in 1976. He formerly held the position of Keeper of Records. He was additionally a member of the Pi Epsilon Kappa Fraternity.

Thomas was the recipient of the Connecticut High School Coaches' Association Outstanding Boys' Coach of the Year Award in Tennis for the year 1984. He later received a Recognition Award from the Stamford Board of Education in 1992 which acknowledged longevity in his teaching career in the city of Stamford. He was the recipient of an Achievement Award from the 100 Black Men of Stamford in 1995. He thereafter received an Achievement Award from the Stamford Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. in 2012.

Thomas Smith maintained a passion for various sports activities. He reveled in opportunities to engage in the playing of basketball and took pride in the success of students whom he mentored in basketball and tennis. A spectator sports enthusiast, he delighted in watching the Giants win football games, the Knicks play basketball and the L.A. Dodgers display their baseball skills. Of course, tennis with the Williams sisters and golf with Tiger Woods were also his favorites.

A quiet, compassionate, gentile and amiable individual, he possessed a deep and abiding generosity of spirit. He was a congenial and considerate man who generously embraced others with his heartwarming personality. He maintained

a profound love for his wife, sons, seven siblings, and numerous nieces, nephews and cousins. Thomas cherished the quality time which he was privileged to spend with his family during holiday gatherings and reunions. He diligently supported his sons, to whom he was greatly endeared, during Junior Achievement, Inroads, Little League Baseball, Basketball and Soccer for Youth and academic and community programs. He was beloved by his students whom he mentored in health and physical education. He provided them with wisdom and guidance and wisdom for their future lives,

Among family members and close friends, he displayed much exuberance and enthusiasm for life, and exhibited a vibrant and jovial sense of humor. A connoisseur of various types of music, Tom enjoyed a repertoire of gospel, church hymns, anthems, Broadway Show tunes, vintage popular music and jazz among other genres. A lover of varieties of cuisine, he delighted in the consumption of delectable family prepared holiday meals and engaging in fine restaurant dining experiences. He also found joy in the baking of cakes and pies for special occasions.

Tom derived great pleasure from excursions with his wife and family to Nassau in the Bahamas, Mexico City, Taxco and Acapulco in Mexico, cruises to St. John's, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in Canada, and visits to Florida, Maryland, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia and other locations within the United States. He greatly relished travel to annual familial celebrations in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

He leaves to cherish his treasured memory, his wife: Margaret J. Smith, two sons: Carter Thomas Smith (Nikisha) of West New York, New Jersey and Mark Leonard Smith of Stamford, Connecticut, five sisters: Amy Ludlow of Neptune, New Jersey, Viola Smith of Ocean, New Jersey, Cicely Saunders of Ocean, New Jersey, Patricia Roberts (Daniel) of Neptune, New Jersey and Sharon Saunders of Ocean, New Jersey and a host of nieces, nephews,

cousins and other relatives and friends.

In lieu of flowers, contributions in memory of Thomas L. Smith may be donated to The Union Baptist Church Student Scholarship Fund ,805 Newfield Ave., Stamford, CT. 06905 and The Stamford Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Diamond Foundation Scholarship Fund, 65 High Ridge Road Suite 402, Stamford, CT. 06905.

A Visitation will be held on January 25th, 2022, at Union Baptist Church in Stamford, Connecticut at 10:30AM – 12:00PM followed by a Celebration of Life Service at 12:00 noon. The service will be live streamed via youtube. Interment will take place at Monmouth Memorial Park in Monmouth, New Jersey on Thursday, January 27th.

Cemetery Details

Monmouth Memorial Park

Monmouth, NJ 07753