

Celebrating The Life
of
Roland Hayes Byers

Sunrise
August 18, 1930

Sunset
January 3, 2015



Sunday, January 18, 2015 - 2:00 p.m.

WOODY “HOME FOR SERVICES”

163 Oakwood Avenue
Orange, New Jersey 07050

Obituary

Roland Hayes Byers was born on August 18, 1930, in Cherryville, NC. He was named for the great African-American classical, opera tenor and composer. Roland was the youngest of the six children born to Hood E. Byers and Vivian (Erwin) Byers. During the depression, his parents brought the family out of the oppression of the South to Washington, DC.

Roland enlisted in the Air Force in 1950 and married Ethel Grace Purnell in 1953. The couple ended their marriage in 1978.

His twenty year military career took him to many places, including Korea, Saudi Arabia, Europe and, during the Vietnam War, Taiwan, and several stateside air bases.

After retiring from the service, Roland worked as a sales representative for the Heublein Corporation in Connecticut and as a regional sales manager for the company in Indiana. He also earned an associate degree in criminal justice around that time. He went on to make his home in New Jersey and served for several years as a criminal investigator for Essex County.

Roland was at heart a musician, singing and playing the piano, as his mother had, at home and in performance groups. His life was enriched by the music he loved, particularly jazz and early gospel. He was an avid lifelong fan of Nat King Cole, Errol Garner and Oscar Perterson.

He was also a talented writer, having won short-story competitions while in the military, and he worked over the years on an unpublished novel based on his life.

Roland passed away at age 84 on January 3, 2015, in Orange, NJ, after a recurrence of cancer. He leaves behind: his daughter, Cassandra Byers Harvin; grandsons, Alexander and Avery Byers Harvin, all of Jersey City; his sister, Betty Smith of Silver Spring, MD; his companion, Lestelle Riddick; his dear friend, Dorothy Brown-Taylor; eight nieces and nephews. His siblings, Wade Byers, Arnold Byers, Thelma Harris and Bill Byers predeceased him.

Any desired contributions in his memory may be made to the Jazz Foundation of America.

Order of Service

Seating of The Family.....The Funeral Director

Welcome To Family And Friends.....Cassandra Byers Harvin

Hymn of Comfort.....“Lead On O King Eternal”

Scripture Reading - Matthew 11:28-30

“Then Jesus said, come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart and you will find rest in your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear and the burden I give you is light.”

Thoughts and Remembrances.....Family and Friends (*Two Minutes Please*)

Poem Reading.....Invictus



Repast

Immediately following the service family and friends are invited for a repast past at

10 Park Italian Restaurant

10 Park Street • Montclair, New Jersey 07042

(973)783-4700

“Invictus”

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever Gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

– William Ernest Henley, 1888

Acknowledgement

*The family of **Roland Hayes Byers** acknowledges with deep appreciation all acts of kindness extended to them during this time. Although a time of sadness for his earthly body, it is a time of joy for his spirit and soul is at peace. Thanks to all relatives, neighbors and friends, who opened their hearts to Roland. Your kind words and support have been a source of comfort to us all.*

Professional Services Provided By

Woody “Home For Services”

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