



James Charles Gower, II

August 3, 1926 - November 5, 2013

Mr. James Charles Gower II, affectionately known as "Lil Willie," "JC" or "Doc" by family and friends, peacefully passed away in the early morning hours of November 5, 2013. He transitioned to be with the Lord as he slept with his loving wife by his side, at their home in Peoria, Illinois. He was 87 years young.

James was born on August 3, 1926 in St. Louis, MO to parents George and Lorraine. As a young child he attended Lovejoy Elementary School, and went on to graduate from Lovejoy High School. After graduating, he served in the United States Army until his honorable discharge as a Staff Sergeant. On December 8, 1948 he was joined in holy matrimony to Carmelita Artis Mae Crutcher, and together they had three sons, George William, James Charles III and Roland Anthony.

After receiving a certificate of completion for meat inspection and processing from Ohio State University for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), he went on to become Peoria's first certified African-American Meat Inspector. He worked in that capacity for the USDA until he retired, after over 30 years of service. Bored with retirement, he began working as a Sales Associate at Sears, and remained there for approximately 10 years until retiring permanently.

James was a member of the Henry Brown Masonic Lodge #22 in Peoria, IL. He was a 32nd degree member of the Menelik #49 Lodge in Springfield, IL and held active membership status at the Kamar Temple #56 Shrine also in Springfield, IL.

Having accepted Christ at an early age, he continued to demonstrate his faith as an adult by being a dutiful member of Zion Baptist Church in Peoria, IL. An active member of his community, he served in various capacities. Although afforded a comfortable lifestyle, ever aware of the disparities and discrimination faced by people of color, James and Carmelita decided to be active participants in the civil rights struggle. Along with their financial support, he and Carmelita lent their time and talents to the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). At one time James served as the Vice-President of the Peoria chapter, under John Gwynn. Minorities enjoying prestigious jobs and improved opportunities in housing and education today stand on the shoulders of their efforts. He also served in an appointed position as the Liquor Commissioner for Peoria County.

Believing that education was the pathway to a better life, he made sure that his three sons, and later his grandchildren all attended college. A dedicated family man, James instilled values of self-respect, confidence, strong work ethic and integrity in his children and grandchildren; encouraging them to continually strive to be their absolute best in all facets of life. He not only taught these values, he lived them.

A stylish man, James always had a crease in his pants and a fresh shine on his shoes. He loved his grandchildren and great-grandson dearly and always ended conversations with them in "Love you more." He enjoyed traveling, spending time with family and friends and completing crossword and word-find puzzles.

James will be sadly missed as a beloved husband, father, father-in-law, grand and great-grandfather, uncle, cousin and friend.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his only brother, Ledell Peaston.

James leaves to cherish his memory, his loving wife of 65 years, Carmelita Artis Mae; three sons, George William (Sheila A.), James Charles III (Diane I.), and Roland Anthony; grandchildren De' janelle Nicole, Derek Prentiss, James Charles IV, Jameel Christiaan, Jarad Carlton, Monique Nicole and Bryce Anthony; great-grandson James Charles V; and a host of beloved nieces, nephews, cousins and treasured friends.

Visitation will be held at Zion Baptist Church from 6-8 pm on Tuesday, November 12, 2013. Funeral services will be held at 11 am on Wednesday, November 13, 2013 with a visitation one hour prior beginning at 10 am at Zion Baptist Church. Masonic services will be at 10:45 am. Pastor Samuel Duren will officiate. James will be laid to rest at Parkview Cemetery where Army Military Honor Rites will be performed by the Tazewell Area Ceremonial Team. Simons Mortuary has been entrusted with arrangements. Online condolences may be made at simonsmortuary.com website.

Cemetery

Parkview Cemetery

2001 N University St

Peoria, IL, 61604

Comments



“ Dear Grandpa:
November 5, 2013, you passed away after fighting a good, long fight.
You held Grandma's hand, told her you loved her, then slipped away peacefully during the night.
Even though I knew your health was fading, I found it hard then, and still to say goodbye.
I'm struggling with the finality death has brought, and just want to sit and cry.
I'm trying to hold strong to my faith,
I know deep down it will bring me through, and
I remember what you always told me...."DJ, there isn't anything that you can't do!"
You were always a big support, with your loving and encouraging ways, and
As a small token in return, I'm so happy that I was with you on your final day, and
More importantly that you were able to hear me and I got the chance to say,
Thank you, and I love you Grandpa!
ps-I MISS YOU, but I know I'll see you again one day.

Love Forever and Always,
Your Granddaughter-Dé janelle Nicole



Dé janelle N. Gower - November 13, 2013 at 03:25 AM



“ Our Prayers are lifted up for the family, at this difficult time. May the Lord, give you the needed strength as you go through the grieving process. Mr. Gower, is going to be dearly missed.

With all our love,

Tyrone Ramsey & Family

Tyrone R - November 13, 2013 at 06:40 PM



“ May our prayers and condolences give the Gower family strength in their time of mourning.

John Covington and family.



John Covington - November 12, 2013 at 05:36 PM



“ Thanks home boy. We feel the strength of love & prayers coming from ur heart. One Love

Tony Gower - November 19, 2013 at 09:47 AM



“ My sympathy to all of the Gower family. My fondest memory of the Mr. Gower was at Peoria High School basketball games making sure that the refs made the right calls and his two boys were showed their stuff on the in the floor....GREAT Memories. I know you will miss him but just always look back on the great life you all shared. What Love and Joy!

Mrs, Bruce (Marilyn) Boyle - November 12, 2013 at 01:38 PM



“ Thank u very much & he enjoyed the way coach made us men on & off the floor. One Love Tony :))

Tony Gower - November 19, 2013 at 09:45 AM



“ Always a smile, a man of principle a real cool guy, my condolences go out to the to Mrs Gower and the family. Maurice Calhoun

Maurice Calhou - November 09, 2013 at 08:53 PM



“ Thanks. He was exactly what u posted & smooth too. One Love :))

Tony Gower - November 19, 2013 at 09:50 AM



“ My condolences to the family. I have the best memories of Mr. Gower, for he represented what it was to be a man! He reminded me of my dad, strong, ethical and a generous heart. He and his wife were very supportive of me and my children who were strangers in a new city/state. You all are forever embedded in my family's heart. You..the Gower's are very special people. Mr. Gower will be truly missed.

Love you all... The Massenburg's (Velda & sons...Scotty, A.K. & Omari)



Velda Massenburg - November 09, 2013 at 09:11 AM



“ U will always be part of the Gower family. Thank u for the kind words. One Love :))

Tony Gower - November 19, 2013 at 09:49 AM