

In Loving Memory

John David Mitchell Sr.

Deacon John David Mitchell Sr., also known to his family as "JD," was born Sept. 5, 1922 in Kildare, Texas, and died Jan. 25, 2013.



He was second child born to the late George Mitchell Sr. and Eddie Mae Gross Mitchell, and accepted Christ at a very early age at St. John Baptist Church in Kildare. At the age of 12 he was serving as a junior deacon.

He attended grade school and high school in Kildare. He joined the army at age 17 during World War II and served his country well. He was proud of his service and wore his Veteran of Foreign War hat with pride.

On Dec. 25, 1941, Deacon Mitchell married the first love of his life, the late Rodessa Annette Mitchell. To this union were born 13 children. Four sons, baby boy Mitchell (1942), Earl Ray Mitchell (1965), Curtis Lavon Mitchell (1991), and Marvin Glenn

Mitchell (2005); four brothers, and four sisters, preceded him in death.

Deacon Mitchell's father was a visionary, encouraging his children to leave the South for a new age of industrial labor. In the late 1940s Deacon Mitchell moved his family to West Richland, Wash., where he was employed on the janitorial crew working at the McNary Dam.

In the mid-1950s he heard about a progressive minister, the late Dr. Rev. O. B. Williams and wanted to be part of that ministry. He began looking and found employment in the Portland area and in 1956 he moved his family to Portland.

Deacon Mitchell loved the Lord and served in many ministries. He served as Deacon of Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church, New Hope Baptist Church, and Greater New Hope Baptist Church; serving as a member of the Gospel choir, as a Sunday school teacher, as superintendent of Sunday school, and as Deacon for the Pacific Northwest Convention Ushers.

Deacon Mitchell worked and retired from several companies: Esco (28 years), school bus company (10 years), and TriMet (12 years). During the summers through the mid-1960s after working at Esco all night he would join his family at the Oregon Trail Farms. You can hear Deacon Mitchell saying "If a man don't work, he don't eat."

After the death of his first love of 47 years (Rodessa), he married his second love in 1999, Rosa Gachet. Rosa made our dad very happy. They both traveled and cruised the world, going to the Mediterranean Sea, Europe, Panama Canal, Alaska, Virgin Islands, Mexico, Caribbean and many places in the United States.

Deacon Mitchell leaves to celebrate his home-going, his wife Rodessa Gachet; 10 children, Raymond, Cal (Marva), Jewell Norman, John Jr. (Jane), Barbara, and Jefferson Gachet (Dennis Fay), all of Portland; Arthur (Natalie) of Southlake, Texas, Pamela Marshall, Jimmie, of Jacksonville, Fla., and Gregory of Oakland, Calif.; two brothers, Norris Mitchell Sr., Seattle, and James Melvin Mitchell, Houston, Texas; and a sister Inez Jefferson of Dallas,

Texas; 25 grandchildren, 25 great grandchildren and 2 great-great grandchildren and special friends Beatrice Moore and Barbara Propps. He leaves a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and friends.

A viewing will be held at Ross Hollywood Chapel on Friday, Feb. 1 from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. with a service held the following day at Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church at 11 a.m.

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Voices against Closures

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Andronici said closing schools is destabilizing to those who need the most stability—the long-term, marginalized community of the Jefferson cluster.

"I want the school board to slow this process down and come up with a well-thought out, strategic long-term plan for this cluster," she said.

Representing more than 4,000 teachers in the Portland area, President of Portland's Association of Teachers Gwen Sullivan said it's not about which schools to close, but how are we going to work together to make sure our kids have resources in those schools.

"Every single neighborhood deserves a very strong quality neighborhood school," said Sullivan.

Protestors filing inside Jefferson after the rally were served hot coffee and tea before the Portland Public School board sat everyone down for a "listening session."

Superintendent Carole Smith announced that she was appreciative for the passion demonstrated by parents and teachers who really cared about their kids and schools.

On the tables before them were district provided information and statistics entitled "Enrollment balancing," and feedback forms for "Jefferson PK-8 Schools: Options for finding the balance."

The school district outlined two proposal options. The first, promoting stronger, larger K-8 schools, would close Woodlawn school and consolidate those students into a

dual K-8 campus with lower grades at Chief Joseph and upper grades at Ockley Green. The second, promoting a middle school K-8 blend, would create a junior middle college (6-8) at Ockley Green, moving Chief Joseph 5th graders to Woodlawn, and likely closing Vernon or splitting the campus with King.

Transfer and boundary changes were also sketched out in the proposal draft.

"What I am hoping is that you can provide information for what I go forward with," said Smith.


Frustration and tension bubbled in the room and one grandparent stood to protest, "This meeting is designed to make people feel like they have input, but how can I know that our input is really valuable?" A majority of the crowd nodded and clapped with approval.

A discussion followed of how ideas should be coming from the community to inform the school board how to address school issues, not from the top down.

One parent of a child at Vernon said the Jefferson cluster and community has been battling school closures since 1980, and the school district continues to use fancy words like "enrollment balancing" for closing schools.

One young black woman helped put the situation in perspective for minorities. She said due to past racism and segregation, "Blacks were forced into north and northeast Portland. Out of survival we created a community." Now, she said, "Classicism and racism are breaking up that community."

Many argued that the district's transfer policy, which allows families to transfer out of their neighborhood schools to other, often more affluent and financially-supported schools, leaving those left behind under-enrolled and lacking resources, breeds segregation and should be ended.



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