

In Remembrance

Luther Strong Jr.

Luther Strong Jr. was born on January 3, 1935, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, to Luther Strong Sr. and Opal Strong. Luther grew up in a loving family of his parents, two sisters (Gail and Selena) and two brothers (Julius and Jackie). The family migrated northwest to Portland, Oregon, in the early 1940's. His parents worked hard to establish a secure foundation for their family.

Luther attended Vanport Elementary school in St. Johns. He attended Roosevelt High School and graduated in 1954. He was a star athlete at Roosevelt, lettering in basketball, football, and track. His basketball team won the state championship that year. His athletic skill and ability earned him a scholarship that paved the way for higher education. He used to shine shoes to earn extra money for school. Luther went on to graduate from Linfield College, where he continued to play football and ran track. Luther was the first African American male to graduate from Linfield.

In 1959 Luther met Jessie B. Strong, the love of his life. In 1961 Luther proposed to Bea in the form of a love letter and the two of them wed. Together they had 5 children, Mark, David, Stephen, Catherine and Sonda.

Luther was active in the Civil Rights Movement. He had a heart for his community and was a leader in promoting civil rights and ending segregation. In the summer of 1964, he led a protest march of over 250 people from the heart of Portland's then-segregated city to the heart of the downtown financial district "demanding Jobs & Justice." This was a proud and momentous day for Luther and his friend Jan Wyers as they worked hard to gain support for the march which had a great impact. Luther and Jan es-

tablished the Portland chapter of SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee), which coordinated campaigns against segregation, racism and promoted voter education.

In 1965, Luther's career led him to Richland, Washington, where he worked at Hanford Nuclear Station, overseeing care of the site. In 1967, the family moved to Bellevue, Washington, where Luther worked as the Model Cities childcare project director. He later took on the pioneering role of Director of the University Health Sciences Center Office for Minority Affairs with the University of Washington. He actively created and oversaw programs to recruit and retain minority students in the health sciences and other professional fields at the University of Washington. He also served as a political science professor at the university. Luther envisioned a future where there was no longer a need to worry about minority recruitment and advocacy to attend college. In addition to his tenure at the University of Washington, Luther's professional career included working in public service for the State of Washington as a manager, educator, and trainer.

In 1977, the family moved back to Portland Oregon where he continued this type of work. He worked as a professor at Chemeketa Community College, a teacher at the Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center, and a student counselor for Portland Public Schools. Additionally, he served as a corrections officer and juvenile counselor for many years with Multnomah County.

Throughout Luther's life, his accomplishments were many. He earned a BA from Linfield College in Political Science, a Law Degree from La Salle University,



and a Master of Public Administration from the University of Washington. He served in the Marines as a Corporal.

While in the Marines, he played football and earned the title of Marine Corps boxing champion. In 1976, he was appointed to the rank of Lieutenant Commander in the Navy.

Luther was an entrepreneur. His business ventures include owning a janitorial and landscaping business, Luther's BBQ Restaurant, Strong's Flea Market, and a real estate business. He was in real estate until his very last breath. In 1997, Luther retired from Multnomah County after 16 years of service. Following his retirement, he worked at his brother Jackie's adult foster care home. He loved the guys there. This work gave him purpose and being a mentor for the residents was one of his passions.

Well into his late eighties, Luther and his wife Bea, enjoyed in the simple pleasure of browsing through thrift stores, prizing antiques and other hidden gems they found along the way. Additionally,

he also enjoyed trips to the spa with his son Steve to get mani/pedis. He loved taking his family out to eat, often favoring Elmer's on Sundays after church, where he slipped away to the back lounge to play the poker machines during the meal. Luther loved his family and was very proud of them. He adored all his grandkids.

Luther instilled in the lives of his kids and grandkids the value of hard work and what he called "intestinal fortitude," and generosity. One of his notorious sayings was, "There is no such thing as CAN'T." Luther valued all people. He was a humanitarian that always saw the good in others and always assumed the best. Luther was a master storyteller and hilarious jokester. He loved to tell his grandkids stories and always wanted to make sure they were studying hard and learning at school. He had a way of bringing peace and calm to tough situations. He brought a balance to the family with his continual love and encouragement. Most of all, he was extremely generous. He loved to give! He was empathetic and always willing to help someone in need. Whenever someone came over to visit, he would say "bring me my brown bag." There wasn't a person that didn't receive a \$20, \$50 or \$100 bill from his "brown bag."

Luther loved his family and most of all he loved his wife. Luther leaves behind a legacy of generosity, family, hard work, education and positivity.

Luther is preceded in death by his father, Luther Strong Sr.; mother, Opal Strong; sisters, Selena and Gail Strong (Wade Price), Eileen Strong (Jackie Strong); brother, Julius Strong; and his son, David Strong. Luther leaves a legacy of encouragement and love to his beloved wife, Jessie B. Strong; his children, Mark Strong (Marla), Stephen Strong (Tami), Catherine Rhodes (Demetrius) and Sonda Fields (Julius), as well as 17 grandchildren, 5 great-grandchildren and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.



Joyce Washington

Born: 1937 – 1996

*Joyce Washington Believed in this Community
and all those that made this Community Great.*

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