



Mr. Leroy Burgess

August 6, 1938 - August 5, 2018

In Loving Memory Of Leroy Burgess:

Leroy Burgess was born on August 6, 1938 in his family's home on Holford Street in River Rouge, Michigan. Born to Tennie Johnson Burgess and Willie Burgess, Leroy was the third of 11 children. His parents, three sisters Betty Lou White, Connie Burgess, and Tennie Mae Carter and two brothers Willie James Burgess and Percy Burgess preceded him in death.

From a very early age Leroy was a leader and a defender. He never thought twice about standing up for what he felt was fair—no matter who he was up against. His entrepreneurial spirit started as early as elementary school where he attended Northrup Elementary and would negotiate odd jobs for he and his friends to make a little spending cash. This sense of financial independence prompted in him a penchant to earn money and negotiate deals—a skill that lasted a lifetime.

By the time Leroy started River Rouge High School, he was working hard to achieve financial independence, often holding two jobs to ensure his needs (and those of the people he loved) were met. He was 17 years old when, his mother unexpectedly passed away leaving him even more inclined to look out for his younger siblings as he grew older. He was a member of the journalism club and school paper and was fast becoming a championship boxer around the Detroit area. It was also in high school that he fell in love with Rosemary

Bates, the love of his life, whom he married the weekend following their high school graduation in 1957.

By 1960, Leroy had already worked in the steel and car manufacturing industries for years and had two of their three children. They bought their first home on Lenoir Street where they built a community of friends while raising their family and creating an atmosphere in their home of love, happiness and possibility. A huge proponent of education, Leroy followed through on a promise to put Rosemary through college and she earned her bachelor's degree in education (and later her Master's in Library Science) at Wayne State University. A true original, Leroy approached life with a courageous spirit and a desire to create a full life without boundaries for his family.

Family was everything to Leroy. Despite their youth he and Rosemary understood the importance of being a united team from the very beginning. Wisely, they went about the business of building their family on a solid foundation of love, trust, honesty and exploration. Leroy was accepted and successfully completed the Wayne County Police Academy. He served as a Wayne County deputy sheriff until 1968 when the Detroit riots erupted and led him to being dismissed by his commanding officers for taking a teen who had been shot with a tear gas cannister to the hospital despite on-duty officers suggesting he wait for the ambulance and risk the youth bleeding out. Leroy was off duty when this occurred and jumped into action to help save the youth's life.

This circumstance led to a challenging period in his life, but Leroy didn't allow it to stop his dreams for something bigger. He was ultimately reinstated with full back pay, but declined the invitation to come back. Always a lover of architecture and real estate, Leroy took that time following his departure from the sheriff's department to design and build a house from the ground up.

In 1975, when their eldest daughter, Rhonda, was accepted to attend college at The University of Southern California, Leroy and Rosemary decided to act on a dream of their own to live on the west coast. They packed up their lives in River Rouge and moved to Pasadena, California where they embarked on a new life for themselves and their family and learned all about the beauty of investing in real estate.

Leroy and Rosemary raised their children with an eye toward building independent thinkers prepared to meet the challenges of the world. Leroy was the ultimate coach, the inspirational leader; the one who expounded on the benefits of freedom. He explained that freedom isn't free. It takes hard work and a courageous spirit to realize your dreams, while his "ride or die" partner, Rosemary, was the teacher and cultural director with introductions for the children to the arts, music, dance and books.

Leroy worked with American Airlines in California until he retired and they returned to Michigan, specifically Detroit, the city that he missed and loved. A man of great instincts and wisdom, Leroy had the foresight to follow their strides made in real estate and invested wisely in the future of Detroit, decades before the present resurgence of this beautiful city.

Anyone who ever met Leroy Burgess remembered him because he was a man who knew his heart's desire. He was clear on where he wanted to go in this life. They also remembered him for his wit, humor, intellect and sharp tongue. I think we can all agree Leroy was not always the most diplomatic person. He was direct and often blunt and he didn't pull punches in a battle of words; but he was also generous, loyal to his friends and family, devoted to his children, and thankful for his wife and partner, Rosemary. Leroy lived life on his own terms, always. He spoke his truth and was a wise and encouraging person, who was often sought out for counsel. He loved to see people,

especially African Americans, rise up to answer their dreams, to unapologetically accept the challenges of advancement and to wholly dismiss the untruths and discouragement often dispensed to black children during the time period in which he grew up.

Previous Events

Visitation Only

Thursday, Aug. **9**. 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

O. H. Pye, III Funeral Home
17600 Plymouth Road
Detroit, MI 48227
(313) 838-9770
info@pyefuneralhome.com

Tribute Wall



“ *Mr. Leroy Burgess*

January 21, 2023 at 09:34 PM



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