



## Oliver James

February 3, 1921 - October 4, 2020

Oliver James, the only son of the late Jack and Louise James, was born on February 3, 1921 in Florence, South Carolina. Oliver, or “Son” as he was often called was the third oldest of four children. On October 4, 2020 in the early morning Oliver went home to be with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Oliver attended public schools in Florence, South Carolina and graduated in 1942 from Wilson High School. While in high school he learned to play the Tuba and Trumpet and he played in the school orchestra and band. Oliver also played football his last 2 years at Wilson.

After graduation Oliver headed north to Newport News, VA, where he studied Mechanics and Blueprints at Hampton University 3 nights a week. When Oliver’s hopes of being a Machinist were dashed, he once again headed north and settled in Baltimore, Maryland. He was fortunate to get a job with Glen L. Martin (also known as American-Marietta Corporation), in Middle River.

Just before entering the Navy, Oliver married his sweetheart and the love of his life, Mamie Howard on February 27, 1946. This union was blessed with three children; sons Bernard and Calvin, and a daughter, Olivia. God further blessed their family with three beautiful grandchildren; Cristian and Matthew (born to Calvin) and Catherine (born to Olivia), and two great-grandchildren, Brionah and Daniel (born to Cristian).

Oliver stayed in the Navy until November 1946 and then joined the U.S. Army Reserves in 1947. Oliver continued in the Army Reserve and started working in the Signal Corps, the branch of the Army that manages communications and information systems. While working in the Signal Corp, Oliver also went to school to learn how to be a Tailor. This enabled him to make, hem and repair clothing.

Additionally, Oliver attended the Rets Electronic School in downtown Baltimore to learned television repair.

Oliver’s love of jazz music led him to learn how to play the saxophone. He took lessons from A. Jack Thomas who was the 1st African American band leader for the Army and would later become the Director of Music for Morgan College (now known as Morgan State University) and the first African American conductor of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

In the fall of 1954 Oliver saved enough money to purchase a modest 3 bedroom home in northwest Baltimore for his young family. Oliver was very proud that he had been able to secure a home in the area. Later the same year the Signal Corps closed and Oliver returned to work full-time for Glen L. Martin until 1957. Oliver really enjoyed working for Glen L. Martin but unfortunately, in early 1957 Glen L. Martin relocated to Philadelphia. Having just purchased a new home and having a young family Oliver made the difficult decision to look for permanent employment closer to Baltimore rather than be away from his family for several weeks every month. One of the last projects Oliver worked on before the contract ended was the cockpit used in the first Space shuttle.

In the fall of 1957, Oliver went to work for the Baltimore Transit Company (now known as the Maryland Transit Authority or the "MTA") as a driver. The job wasn't easy but Oliver quickly learned the different routes and worked numerous bus lines. His work schedule initially varied, but as he gained some seniority he was able to pick work schedules that allowed him to help out at home when his wife Mamie went back to school to become a nurse. Oliver wanted to ensure someone was always home once his children were out of school. When the children were older, his early morning work schedule allowed him to attend the after-school sporting events of his two sons, Bernard and Calvin; which included baseball, track and field, and football. In fact, Oliver made it a point to be present at every game and most practices. Oliver worked full time for the company until he retired 1986.

In 1987 Oliver was recruited to return to work part-time for the MTA Customer Support Line. Oliver had the ability to provide callers with the fastest route to any destination often providing them with multiple choices without having to look up the information due to his extensive knowledge of all the different bus routes in the city, good memory and fast recall. Oliver continued to work part-time for the MTA for additional 13 years until he finally retired in 2000.

Oliver was also very active in his community. He was a Baseball coach for many years with the Forest Park Little League Association. He participated in the Hanlon Park/Mondawmin Ave Homeowners Association meetings and was a member of the Mondawmin Block Club. Oliver and Mamie often hosted meetings and holiday parties at their home. He was also a member of the Wilson High School Alumni Association Baltimore Washington Chapter. He was an active participant and attended their yearly activities and supported their annual scholarship fundraiser. Oliver loved all sports but he particularly loved to watch football, baseball and basketball. He was a loyal Orioles fan and would listen to the games on the radio when the game wasn't televised. He also followed the Baltimore Colts and later the Baltimore Ravens and Washington Redskins, as well as several professional basketball teams. While the Orioles, Ravens, and Redskins were among his favorite teams, Oliver would also follow all the professional baseball, football and

basketball teams as well as college teams; and naturally, he could tell you anything you wanted to know about each of the players.

Family was always very important to Oliver. Even after leaving home, whenever possible he continued to support his parents in Florence, South Carolina and his sisters. Oliver has often said that he likes to help others because people helped him when he was growing up. Whenever possible, Oliver and his family would travel back to Florence during Easter and/or summer vacation to see his parents and sisters. Oliver fondly recalls the fun he and his family had during these visits. Later, after all three children moved away from home Oliver also looked forward to the whole family, including his grandchildren and daughter-in-laws attending the annual, "James Family Reunion" in Florence, South Carolina. It was an opportunity for the family to get together and learn about their rich heritage.

Oliver had high expectation of himself and others. He encouraged his children to participate in after-school activities, including sports, music, Boys Scouts and Girl Scouts but he also encouraged/expected them to do well academically in school. Oliver felt being successful in school would help them to be successful later in life. His children knew at an early age that they were expected to; "study hard, get good grades so you can attend college". If you got a "B", Oliver wanted to know why you didn't get an "A", and a "C" was not acceptable; only tolerated until the next report card, when you were expected to do much, much better.

Making certain his children knew the Lord was equally important to Oliver. Initially, attending Morning Star Baptist Church and then later in the 1950's they attended Mount Ararat Baptist Church. In 1959 the family joined Trinity Presbyterian Church. Oliver was one of the founding members of Trinity and one of its oldest members. He and his family were active members and Oliver supported the various programs the church had for the youth and the community.

Oliver enjoyed visiting family and friends. He made it a point to keep in touch with old classmates, co-workers and was known to visit those who were sick or shut-in. In recent years Oliver was not able to make as many visits or attend as many activities as he wanted to but he looked forward to the annual MTA picnic which gave him another opportunity to see some of his former co-workers. He also loved to keep up with the activities related to the James Family Reunion, and he could talk for hours about Jamestown and the family land. He also loved visits from his family and friends. He loved his children dearly and was proud of their accomplishments. His grandchildren had a very special place in his heart. When he became a great-grandfather you could see the pride in his face and how his eyes would always light up when they came to visit.

Oliver felt very blessed to have lived a full life and he was content with what he had been able to accomplish. He tried to be an example for his children,

grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He felt it was important to take advantage of opportunities that allowed you to learn and grown as a person. He valued education, hard work and fortitude. He also thought it was equally as important to help others and give back to your community. Family and friends were very important to him and if he could help someone he did. He was known to celebrate the accomplishments of his nieces, nephews, children from the neighborhood as well as the children of family friends. He had a keen sense of right and wrong and if he felt you were “wrong or out of line” or had “messed up” in some way, you might have to hear some “fussing”, but if he could help you he would. Oliver was a very independent and proud person, but he was also very humble and thankful to God for all the blessings in his life.

Oliver was preceded in death by his parents, Jack and Louise James; his three sisters Mable McCray, Omega Mayo, and Susie Cooper; his beloved wife of 63 years, Mamie; and his two sons Bernard and Calvin. He leaves to mourn and cherish his memory: his only daughter Olivia; his grandchildren, Cristian, Matthew, and Catherine; his great-grandchildren Brionah and Daniel; Daughters-in-Law Pamela and Monica; as well as a host of nieces, nephews, cousins and extended family members and devoted friends.

# Cemetery

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## Garrison Forest Veterans

11501 Garrison Forest Road  
Owings Mills, MD,

# Events

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**OCT** **Wake** 11:00AM - 12:00PM

**20**

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March Life Tribute Center - Randallstown  
5616 Old Court Road, Windsor Mill, MD, US

**OCT** **Service** 12:00PM

**20**

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March Life Tribute Center - Randallstown  
5616 Old Court Road, Windsor Mill, MD, US

# Comments

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“ To View the Webcast of the Funeral for Oliver James, Please Click the Link below.



**March Life Tribute Centers** - October 16, 2020 at 11:31 AM

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“ From: The Small Family, Baltimore, MD  
To: Olivia and the James Family

Dear James Family,

Thank you for sharing your Dad and Grandfather with us. We got to know him through our Mom, Geneva Robinson Small, who was also from Florence, SC, and attended and graduated from Wilson High School. We have known your Dad since we were children. We loved and considered him to be an uncle. Talking to him on the phone or visiting with him was a joy (boy, would he talk, and talk (smile)). We loved how he shared so much history. When we visited him we made sure to bring potato chips, cookies, applesauce, ginger ale sodas, everything chocolate, and some nice smelling bath gels and soaps. It was always a pleasure spending time with him, and we thank you. Please know that you are all in our thoughts and prayers. We celebrate and give thanks to God for a life well lived. He is now safely home. To God be the Glory!!

Love, Peace & Blessings,  
Paula, Johnnie Mae, Anthony and Janice

**Paula Small** - October 20, 2020 at 08:12 PM

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“ I never met Oliver in person. However, I did the opportunity to speak with him by phone and we spoke for a long time. We shared memories of Jamestown from our separate experiences and talked about the people we remembered and had in common. I really enjoyed the conversation I had with Oliver. He truly was a treasure to this family and will always be remembered with love. So grateful for all he brought and gave to us. Love you Oliver.

**Rebecca Washington** - October 20, 2020 at 11:44 AM

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“ From: Christa Marcus Welton  
To: The Family of Oliva James

May the peace that comes from the memories of love shared comfort you now and in the days to come.

We the Welton's family out of Newport News,VA will always remember the good times we had with Mr. Oliva at James Heritage Family Reunion in Florence, SC. He was our historian and will be missed . Mr.

Oliva would call me (Christa Marcus Welton) and shared stories about Mitchell James my great grandfather, James (Jim) James,Syney James, Wright James, Robert James and others about Jamestown in Florence, SC.

Mr. Oliva was very devoted to the James Family Heritage Reunion; we the next generation will keep the legacy alive.

We Love You Mr.Oliva!

**Christa Marcus Welton** - October 20, 2020 at 11:28 AM

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“ We had many good memories of Mr. James. He was like our second father. He will be fondly remembered and missed by us. As a result of his influence our cultural values were shaped in becoming good working citizens in Maryland.

God Bless the family... We Love You

Stevie, David, and Donald

**Steve Ward** - October 20, 2020 at 06:19 AM

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“ I am so honored to have spent time with Oliver and listen to his many stories he shared of the family. He was a wealth of knowledge and I am glad I was able to capture a small piece of it. Rest Well cousin, your work here is done!! My prayers are with your family!!

**Shelina** - October 13, 2020 at 11:57 AM

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“ It was indeed an honor and pleasure to meet and talk with Mr Oliver  
I thank my daughter Shelina for making this happened  
He was a wealth of knowledge

**Harold James** - October 12, 2020 at 10:57 PM

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“ To the family and friends I share in the tremendous loss of our patriarch. Matthew 5:4  
  
Cousin,  
Bernard James

**Bernard James** - October 12, 2020 at 08:42 PM