



Dr. John C. Pannell

February 10, 1949 - May 3, 2026

John Curtiss Pannell (known to many as “Curt”) was born on February 10, 1949, to the late Curtiss and Mary Lee Pannell in Beckley, West Virginia. John was the eldest of five children, a role he carried with pride, responsibility, and quiet strength throughout his life. He was followed in birth by his siblings: Eloise, William (Billy), Pamela, and Angela. Our beloved John departed this life on Sunday, May 3, 2026, at Adventist HealthCare Fort Washington Medical Center.

John received his formal education in West Virginia Public Schools and graduated from Stratton High School in Beckley, West Virginia, at the young age of 16. He then attended Howard University in Washington, DC, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology. While at Howard, John was actively involved in several organizations, including Alpha Phi Omega Fraternity. It was also at Howard University that he met the

love of his life, Sheila Thompson, a fellow student.

On March 1, 1975, John and Sheila were joined in holy matrimony. From their loving union, they were blessed with one beautiful daughter, Juanita Christina, affectionately known as “Chrisie.” Chrisie was truly the apple of her daddy’s eye.

Following his graduation from Howard University, John began his professional career with the District of Columbia Public Schools. As a fluent Spanish speaker, his first position was an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher. Early in his career, John recognized his deep passion for education and helping others learn. This passion led him to enroll at George Washington University in Washington, DC, where he earned a Master of Arts degree in Urban Learning. He later earned his Doctorate of Pedagogy (Education) from New England College in Henniker, New Hampshire, after which he was professionally known as “Dr. Pannell.”

His unwavering commitment to children and education led to him earning numerous awards and honors, including DC’s Ward 8 “Principal of the Year” for three consecutive years, “Outstanding Principal of the Year” on several occasions, and “Outstanding Male Educator.” His remarkable work and leadership were also recognized in several national

publications, including Time Magazine (December 21, 1992), Black Achievers (March 1993), Executive Educator Magazine (October 1993), and The Washington Post (April 1998). In keeping with his lifelong commitment to service, Dr. Pannell was initiated into Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated.

Throughout his distinguished career, Dr. Pannell held many roles in education, including Special Education Program Assistant, Social Worker, Guidance Counselor, Vice Principal, and Principal at various schools in Washington, DC. He graced the halls of Lincoln Jr. High, Douglas Jr. High, Ballou Senior High, and Malcolm X Elementary. He retired from Friendship Public Charter School as Principal of the Chamberlain Elementary Campus in 2005.

After retirement, Dr. Pannell joyfully embraced his newest and favorite role, Granddad.

Known lovingly as “Pop-Pop”, he adored his two grandsons, Charlie and Johnathan.

Anyone who spent more than five minutes in conversation with him knew that his grandboys were the newest sparks of joy in his life. On any given weekend, John could be found proudly supporting his grandsons at their many sporting events or sharing his love

of fishing with them. Even as his health declined, and he could not be there in person, John found creative ways to remain present. He would often stream the games in real-time or ask someone to FaceTime him with the camera turned toward the court or field. He was determined to cheer on his grandboys, never missing an opportunity to show his love and support.

John was a man of many talents, especially in music. He excelled in playing the trombone, piano, and organ. During most of his teenage years, John served as the church organist for New Hope Baptist Church in Beckley, West Virginia. He later played the keyboard in an R&B/Funk band called Things and Stuff, performing throughout the Washington, DC metropolitan area for four years. John deeply loved music and was affectionately known as the neighborhood DJ. On any sunny day, you could find him outside, filling the cul-de-sac with Motown classics, lifting spirits and putting everyone who heard them in a good mood.

John was also an avid outdoorsman. He loved it all - riding motorcycles, camping, hunting, fishing, and boating. His free days were spent literally "sitting on the dock of the bay" with his fishing pole in hand. On other days he enjoyed his boat, "Old

Skool", cruising
the Potomac River.

John was preceded in death by his siblings Eloise Copney, Pamela Pannell, and William Pannell. John will continue to live in the hearts and minds of those who love him and cherish the memories of their time with him. Rejoicing in his life are his wife of fifty-one years, Sheila; daughter, Juanita Battle (Charles II); sister, Angela Booker (Ronnie) of Beckley, WV; two grandsons, Charles E. Battle III (age 16) and Johnathan Chase Battle (age 14); brother-in-law, Phillip Copney, Sr., and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and many other relatives and friends.

Cemetery Details

Private

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 14. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Nehemiah Family Worship Center
5607 Old Crain Hwy
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Funeral Service

MAY 14. 11:00 AM (ET)

Nehemiah Family Worship Center
5607 Old Crain Hwy
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

Tribute Wall



“ If you went to Chamberlain, sad to inform you Dr. Pannell has passed away 😞 He was definitely our Joe Clark like everyone says. Truly held us to a high standard because we were black kids and he seen where we came from. The “Zero Noise, hands behind your back, walk in a straight line, cross your hands at the table or desk.” Dr. Pannell did not play and if you got caught, you definitely was in for it.

But when you seen the sweet side, he was the best 😊 I use to always get in trouble for running and I thought I was in for it when I went to the office. He called me rabbit and put me in Run for the Arts and afterschool programs. Didn't yell, just told me I needed to put my energy somewhere. I remember, “How can you do art, when you don't stop moving” 😂

Mandated parental involvement! Do yall remember when he kicked out over 50 kids for parents not showing up to school for any progress reports or report cards 😞 Had the whole school shook lol. But he made a difference and that's what it took.

I could go on and on about the best Principal ever ❤️ But I can't. Thank you Dr. Pannell for instilling the importance of education, professionalism, perfecting my craft, going for what I want and standing with confidence. Because sir, one thing you made us do was say those core values everyday and I still remember the song 😂

You definitely left a beautiful mark and legacy 🕊️

R.I.P. Dr. Pannell 🙏

Bridgette Coffey - May 16 at 09:05 AM

DM

“ Deanna Mingo planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. John C. Pannell.

Deanna Mingo - May 15 at 12:58 PM



“ Thank you for your leadership and your love for our children. You gave us the opportunity to make a difference in the community. Your guidance helped shape us into leaders in our careers as well as in our personal lives. You are truly one of the greatest blessings and inspirations we could have asked for. Thank you for everything you have done.
With love and great admiration,
Valencia Covert

Valencia Covert - May 14 at 02:15 PM

IW

“ My sincere sympathy to Sheila and Chrisie of your loss. Many happy conversations shared in the past on our families achievements and goals while working at DCGH. Again, so sorry for your loss. Irma W.

IRMA WIMBUSH - May 14 at 10:28 AM

LB

“ Dr. John Curtiss Pannell will always be remembered as a kind, devoted, protective and loving husband, father and friend. He had a keen sense of humor that brightened the spirit of all who knew him. Our loss is truly heaven's gain. May his memory continue to live in the lives that he touched. I am blessed to have known Dr. John Curtiss Pannell. I pray for the strength and comfort of his family during this difficult time.

Lucille Brewer - May 14 at 08:59 AM

KH

“ Thanks for being there when my boys needed a lil stern talking to they will miss you and say hello to your student Delonta Hendrix rip see you later

karin Hendrix - May 14 at 07:53 AM

EH

My condolences to Juanita and family. I'm praying for God's cover over your family. Hugs and love you. Eunica H.

Eunica H - May 14 at 04:29 PM

BI

“ 1 file added to the album Pannell Family



Bill - May 13 at 11:33 AM

ER

Dr Purnel would be missed He was the best Principal he knew All the children at Chamberlain Friendship School my Children and family members we all loved him RIP 💕 My Prayers are with family 🙏 and love one's 🙏

Elaine Ross - May 14 at 11:33 AM

SH

“ Sharon Wright, Jewell Hoover & Carolyn Henry purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Dr. John C. Pannell.



Sharon Wright, Jewell Hoover & Carolyn Henry - May 13 at 10:34 AM

SH

“ Sharon Wright, Jewell Hoover & Carolyn Henry planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. John C. Pannell.

Sharon Wright, Jewell Hoover & Carolyn Henry - May 13 at 10:34 AM

NP

“ Norma Parker lit a candle in memory of John Pannell



Norma Parker - May 13 at 10:10 AM

FR

“ From Bill and Alfreda Ritchie purchased the Vivid Recollections for the family of Dr. John C. Pannell.



From Bill and Alfreda Ritchie - May 12 at 04:59 AM

GH

“Ginger Howard planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. John C. Pannell.

Ginger Howard - May 11 at 02:13 PM

GH

“Ginger Howard purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Dr. John C. Pannell.



Ginger Howard - May 11 at 02:13 PM

CL

“ As my family passes on one by one I feel the loneliness of people no longer here that I have known my entire life. That I have valued shared family memories that go back to my childhood as long as I can remember. Cousin Johnny and I experienced this more than most. We were born 1 week apart 77 years ago. We were more than just cousins. We were classmates, playmates, friends and rivals. Always an unspoken competition for grades or who was the smartest or who had the best this or that. We had to acknowledge to each other that we were too much alike to ever agree on most anything and neither of us ever experienced an argument that we didn't love. As my family members began to pass away in ever increasing numbers I moved back to the East coast after having lived in California for 40 years just to be closer to family members like Cousin Johnny. I'm now glad we had a chance to visit as Johnny's health began to decline. We talked/argued on the phone regularly about politics and what school was the real "HU" Howard or Hampton. There was always plenty of "colorful" language as both our wives can attest to. But there was also plenty of laughter and love. My heart is broken at the loss of my dear Cousin and prayers to his family. Cousin Charlie

Charles Love - May 11 at 12:09 PM

WS

“ William (Billy) Sawyers planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. John C. Pannell.

William (Billy) Sawyers - May 11 at 11:44 AM

WS

“ William (Billy) Sawyers purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Dr. John C. Pannell.



William (Billy) Sawyers - May 11 at 11:44 AM

CL

“ 1 file added to the album Pannell Family



Charles Love - May 11 at 11:37 AM

CD

Dr. Pannell was one of the most gracious and intelligent men I've ever known...!

Coach Ron Dixon - May 13 at 02:43 PM

CF

“ Cousin Charles Love and Family purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Dr. John C. Pannell.



Cousin Charles Love and Family - May 11 at 11:16 AM

CF

“ Cousin Charles Love and Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. John C. Pannell.

Cousin Charles Love and Family - May 11 at 11:16 AM

MB

“ Sharing your loss as we have known your loved one as friend, neighbor , and family for 48 years. But most grateful for knowing him as Pop, Pop, since we share two wonderful grandsons who will carry on his legacy and remind us daily of how blessed we are to have shared this journey with Curt. Our prayers and love are with the family now and always. Charles & Malinda Battle.

Malinda Battt - May 09 at 09:36 PM

ES

“ With heartfelt sympathy



Eddiena Schoolfield - May 09 at 09:57 AM

ME

“ Melanie E. purchased a sympathy card for the family of Dr. John C. Pannell.



Melanie E. - May 07 at 04:10 PM

AT

“ Adam & the ME Contract Sales Team purchased the Crystal Cross Bouquet for the family of Dr. John C. Pannell.



Adam & the ME Contract Sales Team - May 06 at 01:21 PM

RM

“ Condolences to the family of Dr. John Curtis. my thoughts and prayers are with you at this difficult time.

Ronald McCray - May 05 at 04:31 PM



“ We the March Family and Marshall-March Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

Marshall-March Funeral Homes - May 05 at 04:07 PM