

Samuel Frederick Yette

July 2, 1929 - January 21, 2011

Samuel Frederick Yette was the twelfth child of thirteen children born to Cora Lee Rector Yette and Frank Mack Yette. Samuel was born on July 2, 1929, in Harriman, Tennessee. He died peacefully on January 21, 2011, in Laurel, MD, after battling Alzheimer's Disease. Early in his life, Samuel accepted Jesus Christ as his personal savior, and counted on the Lord's strength to support him through the struggles and joys of life.

Samuel grew up during the days of racial segregation, but his intellect, fortitude and family pride enabled him to excel in school, and eventually attend Morristown College for one year, and then Tennessee State University, where he earned his bachelor's degree in English, in 1951. While at TSU, Samuel founded the college newspaper, *The Meter*, which still reports the news today. He also was initiated into his beloved Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., in 1949. After college, Samuel joined the U.S. Air Force during the Korean War, and served from 1951 to 1953. After leaving the Air Force, Samuel taught high school, and coached high school football and basketball in Rockwood and Chattanooga, TN, before embarking upon a career in journalism.

In 1956, Samuel enrolled in the University of Indiana, where he earned a master's degree in journalism in 1959. Samuel's first journalistic milestone occurred in 1956, when he teamed with legendary photojournalist Gordon

Parks to write a four-part series on civil rights in the South for LIFE Magazine. Samuel became a reporter for the Afro-American Newspapers in Baltimore and Washington, -- where he covered the civil rights movement -- and an associate editor of Ebony Magazine, from 1957 to 1959.

Family was paramount to Samuel. While attending a dance at Knoxville College in Tennessee, he met Sadie Lee Walton, the love of his life whom he married in 1958. Samuel and Sadie had two sons, Frederick and Michael. Tragically, in 1983, Sadie lost her life after a drunk driver hit their car as she and Samuel were driving to a Christmas party.

Samuel's career included positions as the director of information for Tuskegee Institute (now University)(1959-62); first black reporter for the Dayton Journal Herald newspaper (1962); press liaison and then executive secretary of the Peace Corps (1963-1964); special assistant for civil rights to the director of the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity (1964-67); first black Washington correspondent for Newsweek Magazine (1968-71); and Professor of Journalism at Howard University (1972-86). While at Newsweek, Samuel also appeared on several television news programs, including Face the Nation and Meet the Press, where he was one of the reporters who questioned the guests.

Unbeknownst to Newsweek, Samuel worked tirelessly through many nights after work to write his book, *The Choice: The Issue of Black Survival in America*, which was released in 1971. *The Choice* dared to allege that various federal government programs were aimed at re-enslaving, perhaps even wiping out, black Americans. To say the least, the book was controversial and Newsweek fired Samuel. Always a fighter, he sued Newsweek and won before the EEOC, but lost in the courts when the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear his case. Nevertheless, the book won awards and became a text book in 50 universities around the country, including Howard University and

Chicago University. A decade after the book was released, Samuel formed his own publishing company, Cottage Books, Inc., so that he could republish *The Choice* himself. Samuel also published a second book, *Washington and Two Marches*, 1963 and 1983.

Samuel was an adviser to Jesse Jackson in his 1984 Presidential campaign, and a photographer in Jackson's 1988 Presidential bid. Over the years, Samuel continued to write syndicated editorials and columns which appeared in newspapers such as the *Richmond Free Press*, the *Tennessee Tribune* and the *Afro-American Newspapers*. Samuel was well-traveled; he visited the U.S.S.R., Africa, the Middle East, and China, the latter as part of a press delegation led by his friend and renowned journalist, Carl T. Rowan. Wherever Samuel went, he was always carrying a camera around his neck.

Samuel is survived by his son, Frederick and his wife, Alesha Matthews Yette, of Washington, D.C.; his son Michael, of Forestville, MD; his adoring granddaughters, Maya, who is attending Harvard Law School, and Laila, who is attending UNC-Greensboro; his sisters, Johnnie Jones, of Louisville, KY, Marie Reynolds, of Oak Ridge, TN; Lyda McKeldin, of Chattanooga, TN; Alma Ruth Wright, of Conyers, GA, Imogene Gibson, of Miami Beach, FL; one brother, Emmett Yette, of Knoxville, TN; a sister in law, Doris Brown, of Chicago, IL; two brothers in law, Isiah Walton, of Indianapolis, IN, and Eddie Walton, of Eutaw, AL; and a host of other relatives and friends.

Cemetery Details

Fort Lincoln Cemetery

3401 Bladensburg Road
Brentwood, MD 20722

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 28. 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM (ET)

Zion Baptist
4850 Blagden Ave NW
Washington, DC 20011

Service

JAN 28. 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM (ET)

Zion Baptist
4850 Blagden Ave NW
Washington, DC 20011

Tribute Wall



“ Samuel Frederick Yette

October 23, 2023 at 08:15 AM

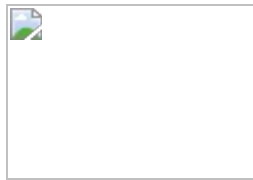


“ When I was a freshman in college in 1971 I managed to read the book "The Choice" by Mr. Yette. His book stuck to my heart and became the motivation for my full and active role in civil rights, activism and support for moving the black community ahead.

ron - September 10, 2013 at 04:12 PM



“ 14 files added to the album Memories Album



Marshall-March Funeral Homes - February 01, 2011 at 04:47 PM

GS

“ Our heartfelt condolences on Sam's passing. He was a kind, gentle man with a unique sense of humor, and will be missed by all who knew him. He was also one half of one of the most beautiful love stories that I ever knew. I'm confident that that love story is now continuing. We send our thoughts and prayers with you. May God bless you and your families.

Gerri Don Sykes - January 28, 2011 at 04:04 PM

RD

“ My mother, Myrtle Loving Kendrick, and I (Rosalyn Yette Dong) send our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Samuel Yette. I have fond memories of his kindness to me during my childhood.

Rosalyn Dong - January 27, 2011 at 02:08 PM

SH

“ Please accept my condolences for the loss of your loved one. First Corinthians 15:26 lovingly informs us that our enemy death will be destroyed. There is hope of our dead loved ones returning to life through the hope of a resurrection. Acts 24:15 informs us that "There is going to be a resurrection." May you receive much comfort and strength from this wonderful promise that will be made possible from Jehovah God and his only-begotten son Jesus Christ.

Sharon Hill - January 27, 2011 at 11:32 AM

HM

“Gloria and I send our deepest sympathy and we are sorry we can't make the funeral. Sam was a great uncle and shared many good times with his immediate and extended family. Everywhere we went there seem to be someone who knew Sam and they always had great things to say about him as a man and his works. We know that both of you Michael and Fred will miss your father as all of us miss our brother and uncle. We share your sorrow but also realize that he is at peace with his father. May God bless each of you and give you strength.

Harry and Gloria McKeldin - January 27, 2011 at 10:49 AM

BR

“Bill and Phyllis Rodgers: Sam Yette and his family were our longtime friends. Our friendship began in 1962 when Sam was with the Dayton Journal Herald. My family and I will always treasure our friendship. We grieve his loss as do all his family and friends. We send our deepest sympathy to Fred, Michael and families. We will miss you buddy, you left your mark with many of us.

Bill Rodgers - January 26, 2011 at 02:00 PM

RH

“My family and I are among the fortunate people to call Sam Yette a friend. To meet and know him is to meet and know a true gentleman with a charismatic presence about him. We will miss him and treasure the relationship we had as friends.

robert Hill - January 26, 2011 at 12:09 PM

KR

“ Sam Yette was a longtime and treasured friend, as are his sons and family, who we have known since our days in Harriman, TN in the mid-1950's. We grieve his loss, but he leaves a legacy of which we can all be proud, and he did more than his share to lift the sights of young people everywhere. Sam will truly be missed, and our prayers go out to his family.

Kenneth and Beulah Jackson

Kenneth R. Jackson - January 25, 2011 at 08:25 AM



“ 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 - January 24, 2011 at 11:44 AM