



William W. Pickrum

January 8, 1948 - April 15, 2021

William Wilbur Pickrum went to be with the Lord on Thursday, April 15, 2021, with his loving wife and daughter by his side. William was a native of Kent County, Maryland, born to the late Willis and Emma Pickrum. William and his brothers, Marvin and Donald, worked with their parents, who were the caretakers and cooks at the YMCA Camp Tockwogh, in Worton, Maryland, responsible for feeding the hundreds of campers. William's father passed when he was 12, but his mother continued to cook for the Camp for a total of 33 years. After all of these years, the kitchen is still named after his mom – Miss Pick's Kitchen. A graduate of Coleman Elementary School and the Henry Highland Garnet High School in Chestertown, MD, William was very active in school, being a member of the Library Club, Basketball Team, Track Team, National Honor Society, Garnett Whispers (School Newspaper), Future Teachers of America, Safety Patrol, the School Chorus and the Concert Band where he played the trumpet. William was always a scholar and received numerous awards while in secondary school and throughout his life.

William was the third African American selected to attend the United States Coast Guard Academy and was the only one in his class. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree from the Academy in 1970. He received a Master of Arts from Chapman College and studied for his Doctor of Public Administration at New York University as a Ph.D. candidate.

William had a distinguished decorated career for over 22 years as an officer in the United States Coast Guard, with duties including Program Analyst, Chief of the Search and Rescue Branch, Operations Officer, Pilot/Supply Officer, National Search and Rescue School Instructor and Pilot/Administration Officer. He was the first African American to earn his aviation wings from the United States Coast Guard Academy. William received several Commendations during his career for saving lives in perilous/dangerous conditions on land and at sea.

After retirement, William was a First Officer Pilot for Florida Gulf Airlines, Inc., a commuter airline serving the U.S. Airways system. While working for U.S. Airways, William and his wife started two small businesses, one to provide management consulting services to the Federal Government and the other to launch a franchise with locations on each of the Virgin Islands.

After years of operations, the Pickrums decided to return to Kent County to care for his mother. Upon returning, William felt the County could be more progressive and decided to run for office. The first time running for office, William was the top vote-getter and was elected to the Kent County Board of County Commissioners in 2002. He often stated that God brought him a campaign committee, led by James Saunders, that set a standard in the County. As the only elected Democrat of the three-person Commission, his leadership abilities were clear, and the two Republican members elected William as the Commission President. William served for 16 years on the Kent County Commission with two of the four terms as President. Many marveled at his life trajectory of being born during segregation to caretakers, of a racially divided county, and becoming the Commission's President.

William loved serving the people of the Delmarva Region and was elected and volunteered to serve on the following entities: Member, Airport Advisory Committee 2002-06; Central Communications Commission 2002-06; Local

Emergency Planning Committee 2002-06; Local Management Board for Children and Family Services 2002-06; Board of License Commissioners 2002-18; Board of Health 2002-18; Parks and Recreation Advisory Board 2006-18. Member, Maryland Rural Broadband Coordination Board, 2006-10. Board of Directors, Upper Shore Aging, 2006-18. Member, Service Academy Selection Committee, 2009-21 for U.S. Senators Barbara Mikulski and her predecessor Senator Chris Van Hollen. Treasurer, Upper Shore Regional Council, 2018 (member, 2002-18; chair, 2006; 3rd vice-chair, 2009; 2nd vice-chair, 2010; 1st vice-chair, 2010-11; chair, 2011-17). Appointed to the State of Maryland Outdoor Recreation Economic Commission by Governor Larry Hogan. Member, National Naval Officers Association, NAACP, Kent County Democratic Central Committee, United States Coast Guard Academy Alumni Assoc. and Henry Highland Garnet Alumni.

William had double duty, also serving as acting County Administrator of Kent County in 2015. During his terms as a County Commissioner, William was hired as the Deputy Director, Government Support Services, State of Delaware Office of Management and Budget. He served in this capacity for seven years and then was hired to be the founding Project Manager for the newly formed Renewable Energy and Education Center at Delaware State University. In addition, he taught political science courses in the College of Humanities, Education, and Social Sciences as an Adjunct Professor. William landed on his passion as an Adjunct Professor in the Delaware State University Aviation program. William loved teaching and inspiring young minds to believe in themselves and to think "outside of the box."

In addition to his work life, William was active in his church. As a member of Mt. Olive African Methodist Episcopal Church in Worton, Maryland, he served on the Married Couples Ministry, Stewardship and Finance Committee, Culinary Arts Committee and was a member of the Mighty Men and the Lay

Organization. As a result of his service, one year, William was elected Man of the Year at the Baltimore Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Conference. His favorite role in the church was working in the kitchen, a remembrance of his days as a youth helping his parents and brothers at the camp.

William loved his family, and became the family historian, researching the family trees of his and his wife's families. He was most proud of his brothers, Marvin and Donald, for their achievements in life and would speak with pride any time someone would ask about them and beam when asked about his children and grandchildren.

William was preceded in death by his parents, Willis and Emma Mae Pickrum; brother, Donald Pickrum (Gladys); uncles and aunts; and a very close friend from the 3rd grade, Dolson Anderson (Lynda).

William is survived by his loving dedicated wife of 28 years, Dr. Vita Threatt Pickrum; two children, Gena Ford (Brandon) Bowie, Maryland and Martin Pickrum, Las Vegas, Nevada; three grandchildren, Gabrielle, Brandon "B.J." and Ilana; one brother, Dr. Harvey Marvin Pickrum (Rose); three sisters-in-law, Joyce Threatt Wiley, Laverna Williams and Sonja King, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; two brothers-in-law, David Threatt, Mitchellville, Maryland and Maurice Threatt, Atlanta, Georgia; one uncle, Robert Bayless (Elaine), and a host of cousins and dear friends.

In recognition of his life's work, the Commissioners of Kent County, Maryland, have designated April 30, 2021, as William W. Pickrum Day with all flags in the County lowered in recognition of his passing. Also, the family has established the William W. Pickrum Endowed Scholarship at Delaware State University for matriculating students. Finally, the William W. Pickrum Leadership Scholarship will be awarded annually to a graduating senior from

Kent County High School in Kent County, Maryland

Tribute Wall

AM

“ I've considered William to be a GREAT cousin every since connecting with him initially through another relative. Our great grandparents were siblings--Sandy Allen and Emma Jane Allen-Bayless. We traded genealogy information back and forth, and he'd send me ethnic,religious, or holiday tidbits from time to time. It had been a while since we'd been in touch, and I'd been wondering what he was up to in recent times. I've been so, so sad since learning of his demise.

I'm hoping to somehow be able to speak with William's family in the near future. For that I'll need contact information.

William was my only connection with the Bayless branch of our Allen family, and I don't want that to be a final condition.

*Anna Douglas-Madden
Roswell, New Mexico
760-818-3069*

Anna Madden - August 23, 2021 at 07:25 PM

RS

“ Reggie & Julette Sealey purchased the Beautiful i
n Blue for the family of William W. Pickrum.



Reggie & Julette Sealey - June 05, 2021 at 04:39 PM

SL

“ William Pickrum was a very kind soul. Yes, he was an educated, community oriented, politician and family man. He always had time to say hello with his infectious smile. He had a beautiful singing voice and loved helping in the kitchen at church. He will be missed. My mother and I send love and blessings to you Vita as well as your family. We pray comfort and peace upon you. Stephanie Lindsey

Stephanie Lindsey - May 02, 2021 at 03:00 PM

MD

“ William and I shared some fun times at CGA and only saw each other at reunions for 20 years until we both did our final CG duty together in the 9th District at Cleveland , Ohio. Then we were off to retirement and to become entrepreneurs. Back to seeing each other at reunions. Low and behold he became my employer as Vita and his company hired a bunch of us old Coasties to be Recreational Boat Factory Inspectors. He was a great boss and above all when the going got a little rocky he had our backs. His road in life was a lot rockier than mine and he did it great honor. I am lucky to have know William, had him as a Classmate and above all friend. When he passed a light went out, but the glow of his influence and achievements continues. Fair wind and following , old friend. As we say here in Maine, We will meet again on Fisherman's Green to raise a glass and live in peace. Catherine and Mike Gentile

mdguscga70@gmail.com - May 02, 2021 at 01:51 PM

DT

“ Please accept our most heartfelt sympathies for your loss... Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family during this difficult time.

DSU President Tony Allen, Admin Council & Bd of Tr - April 30, 2021 at 08:08 PM

ID

“ *The memories of our childhood and the appreciation of his ancestry research will stay with me. Anyone we love who loves us in return, never dies.*

Iris Marie (Bayless) Dunson - April 30, 2021 at 11:51 AM

ED

“ *We will miss Bill's smile, his dedication to others, and his place in our lives. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and the family.*

Erroll and Monica Brown, Tony and Debbie Dupree - April 27, 2021 at 09:41 AM

HS

“ *Vita, our thoughts and prayers are with you during this difficult time. Please accept our heartfelt condolences. Sincerely, The Kresge Foundation*

Heartfelt Sympathies Store - April 23, 2021 at 07:38 PM

DA

“ *Celebrating a life well lived whose memories will be cherished forever.*

Del-Mar-Va Council, Boy Scouts of America - April 23, 2021 at 03:23 PM

SC

“ *Marvin May the memories you shared with your brother be of comfort to you. Love and Blessings S Cann*

Sharon Cann - April 22, 2021 at 07:56 PM

GS

“ Our deepest condolences and sympathy to the Pickrum family. Commander Pickrum was to many people of color in the U.S. Coast Guard a symbol of accomplishment and pride he was one of two Black men at that time to earn and wear aviation wings. I had the pleasure of being stationed with him and on a beautiful Saturday morning he allowed me to take the stick of the aircraft and fly around NYC, that was his personality and kindness . He was and will remain for all of us a truly wonderful man who’s presence and smile made the day. Thank you for sharing your husband, father and brother with us.

Glenn Sheridan - April 22, 2021 at 01:34 PM

JA

“ I was honored to serve in the Coast Guard with William and awed by his courage as an upperclassman at the Coast Guard Academy. My condolences to all his family and friends who were privileged to know him throughout his life as my classmate Hardwick Crawford did.

Jim Armstrong - April 22, 2021 at 11:39 AM

HS

“ With deepest sympathy, the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) Staff

Heartfelt Sympathies Store - April 22, 2021 at 11:37 AM

LP

“ Lee Phillips

Lee Phillips - April 21, 2021 at 01:11 PM

VG

“ *My sincere condolences to the Pickrum family. It is an honor to me to have been William's classmate. Rest in peace my friend. Vic Guarino USCGA '70*

Victor Guarino - April 20, 2021 at 07:49 PM

MM

“ *The Mumford family sends our thoughts and prayers out for William. We were very shocked of his passing. William and Vita also have shared service to mankind that we appreciate. William will be missed and leaves a void that will be difficult to fill.*

Mark Mumford - April 20, 2021 at 12:32 AM

JC

“ *We were shocked to hear of Williams' 2019 passing. He and I shared a love of flying and politics. Many good laughs over flying stories always ended with his memorable laugh. His love of service to others and Kent County was only exceeded by his love for Vita and his family. William has left a legacy that will live on and shoes that will never be filled. Our love and prayers to Vita and the family. John and Muffy Caputo*

John Caputo - April 19, 2021 at 01:11 PM

RS

“ *Bill was a Giant as a senior Officer in the Coast Guard. All that came after him appreciated his guidance in forging their own success. Reginald M. Sealey LCDR USCG Retired.*

Reginald Sealey - April 18, 2021 at 02:38 PM

AP

“ William was the senior Black cadet when I entered the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in summer of '69. I was happy that I reached out last year to ask William's approval to make a contribution to his Academy "Link in the Chain" graduating class of 2020. The contribution was made via U.S. Coast Guard Academy Alumni Association honoring William, as the first Black regimental band commander/drum major, to recognize the Class of 2020 regimental band commander/drum major. With My Greatest Respect and Fondest Memories, Allen W. Penn, USCGA Class of '73 Commander, USCGR(ret)

Allen Penn - April 18, 2021 at 12:54 PM

BS

“ My condolence to you Vita & the rest of your family. In the day, stationed with then, Will, at CG AIRSTA Brooklyn, Bill was a good pilot & did his job well. Remember flying with him a few times in the HH-52A helo. I'm shocked he's gone. Sincerely, Ben Stoppe / Class of 1972 / CG Aviator #1646

BENJAMIN J. STOPPE - April 17, 2021 at 09:29 PM

HC

“ Dear Bill, you have been taken well before we were ready to see you go. I know God has a plan, but Linda and I are nevertheless deeply saddened. R.I.P. my friend of 53 years. Hardrick and Linda Crawford Clinton, MD

Hardrick Crawford - April 17, 2021 at 06:02 PM