Henry Yale Harris Sr.

February 21, 1943 – March 31, 2021



Dr. Henry Yale Harris Sr.

Remembering the life and legacy of St. John the Baptist Parish's first Ph.D.

 Dr. Henry Yale Harris, 98, a life-long resident of St. John the Baptist Parish and one of the most highly respected educators in the region and World War II veteran was called to heaven on November 26, 2021 in Atlanta, GA, eight months after his wife of 53 years, educator, Beverly D. Harris made her way to glory.

 Dr. Harris was born the only child to Henry Harris and Mary Freeman Harris, moving to St. John Parish shortly after his birth. Dr. Harris' journey of life-long learning and service began at a time when the highest grade offered to Black students was the eighth grade. Nevertheless, he was determined to never allow anything to stop him so he completed his studies and went on to graduate from McDonough 35 High School in New Orleans, La., where he excelled in French and Algebra. Dr. Harris possessed a contagious passion for education and proved to be a trailblazer, particularly at a time in America when it was difficult for Blacks to further their education. Determined to pursue his purpose, he attended Southern University in the Fall of 1941, where he excelled academically. In 1943, he pledged the esteemed Beta Sigma Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, one of the five fraternities for African American men which works to encourage scholarship and public service. After 2 years of college, Dr. Harris' legacy of service began when he was drafted by the United States Army. Those who fought were known as the greatest generation for their dedication and sacrifice. While enlisted, Dr. Harris was trained in demolitions during Basic Training and served every theater of war traveling to Casablanca in North Africa. He served as a Medic in Guam and finally in France until V Day (Victory in Europe). Dr. Harris served his country with honor and distinction.

 He returned to continue his pursuit of education at Southern University to complete his Bachelor's degree. Understanding the principle of scholarship, Dr. Harris persevered through the segregation policies to achieve his Master's Degree from Indiana University. After integration of the public school system, Dr. Harris achieved a Specialist Degree from Southeastern Louisiana University. Finally achieving his Ph.D. from Waldon University, becoming St. John the Baptist Parish's first individual to earn a Ph.D.

 Dr. Harris knew a lot about being culturally disadvantaged living during the time of Jim Crow era, but was determined to succeed. Dr. Harris was highly credentialed and sought after around the country, but returned to his roots in St. John Parish where he began his tenure as an administrator in 1950 when he administrator of the first high school on the West Bank of the Parish, Second Ward High School in Edgard, La., which offered the first high school diploma for blacks on the West Bank of St. John Parish. Dr. Harris practiced academic excellence his entire professional career touching the lives of thousands of students in various positions as an administrator. He was known by his colleagues and students as a brilliant, fair-minded, and compassionate educator who saw the potential in his students and expected high standards. Under his leadership, Second Ward High School was ranked for high scholastic standards by the state of Louisiana. He was called upon to upgrade the curriculum of 5th Ward Junior High School which received high achievement recognition.

 Dr. Harris was a committed family man of the highest ethical standards who loved God and served his church and community, as well as the institutions he served. He was married to his soulmate and the love of his life of 53 years, Beverly D. Harris, herself an educator who preceded him in death earlier this year. Together they shared a life of service which include membership and service at Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church and Ascension of Our Lord Catholic Church and he was an active member of the Rotary Club. Because he was an only child, family was important to him. He cherished the love of his children, including his first born, the late Henry Harris Jr. and his daughters whom he spoiled and called his princesses, Kashifa and Supriya and his loving grandchildren.

 Dr. Harris will best be remembered as a man of wisdom and knowledge who would give you every detail of any story he told. Because he was so well read, even at the age of 98, he was gifted with an ability to communicate on any relevant issue of the day.

 He leaves to cherish his children Kashifa Harris Lassic (Derrick) and Supriya Harris; grandchildren, Paul Obiora, Kingston Jackson, Kiyan Lassic, Lisa Harris Gunter (Shaun), Andres Harris (Sam), Camilo Harris, Maira Harris; great-grandchildren, Penelope Boesen, Lexa Harris; two sisters-in-law, Rosemary Sorapuru and Jacqueline Rousseve, sister-in-law, Philomena Dinvaut and daughter-in-law Alicia Harris, a host of nieces, nephews, relatives, friends and students.

 He was preceded in death by his wife, Beverly D. Harris, his parents Henry Harris and Mary Freeman Harris, son Henry Harris, Jr., three brothers-in-law Rudolph Dinvaut, Ferdinand Dinvaut III, Mullin Dinvaut, sister-in-law Corine Dinvaut, and brothers-in-law Leroy Sorapuru and Maurice Rousseve, Sr.

 Prayers are appreciated for the family during this time of bereavement. A mass of Christian burial will be held on Saturday, Dec. 11, 2021 at Ascension of Our Lord Catholic Church, 1900 Greenwood Dr, Laplace, LA, 70068, Rev. Cyril Buyeera, officiant. Visitation will begin at 9:00 am. Mass will begin at 11:00 am. Entombment at St. Peter's Catholic Church Cemetery, 1550 LA-44, Reserve, LA, 70084. Final care has been entrusted to Bardell's Mortuary, 3856 LA 44, Mt. Airy, LA 70076. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, mask and social distancing will be strictly enforced.

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