

Charleston Club Tattler

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Irene W. Fields - Dies at 85

Irene Wright Fields dies at age 85 years old!

Mrs. Irene Wright Fields, the second of seven children born to the late William Wright and Ida Horton Wright in December, 1933. She departed this life on Nov. 6th in Ft. Washington, MD.



Irene attended the historic Burke High School where she was a leading majorette in the band. Soon after, she married her husband of 64 years, Charles E. Fields (Col. Ret.). As a dedicated wife and mother, Irene was known as an independent and outspoken woman devoted to supporting her children and husband's military career. Irene loved domestic as well as international travel and especially enjoyed frequent trips to her home in South Carolina, and the Caribbean including the Bahamas. Her hobbies included playing Bridge, making ceramics and stained glass, drawing, and whale-watching. Irene worked as an H&R Block Instructor, Supervisor, and Tax Preparer. She was an accomplished accountant and financial consultant. Irene was also a supervisor in the Future Farmers of America Circulation Department and worked for the University of Maryland Extension Program as a Financial Advisor.

Early in her life, Irene volunteered her time and talents to serve as a "Gray Lady" of the American Red Cross. She served as a room mother at her children's school as well as in the school's nursing office. Additionally, Mrs. Fields proudly served as the Maryland Prince George's County Representative to the Kennedy Center Decorator's Show House for the National Symphony Orchestra. But most of all, she was proud to be a "homemaker." She absolutely loved to cook and bake, and everyone, especially her husband, loved to EAT her cooking and baking. True to her South Carolina heritage, there was always sweet tea, Pepsi, pie, cake, or a pot of rice ready for anybody that came. Irene, the consummate hostess, was famous for her ability to put together and serve an entire meal in 15 minutes. All were welcomed to her kitchen table to eat, drink, and chat. Charlie grew fig trees and Irene made preserves to share with her friends and neighbors. It was always a treat to have Mrs. Fields' buttered biscuits and Fig preserves. Irene was an excellent listener and confidant; full of wise advice and a spicy word or two. She spoke, loved, and gave from her heart; a true Renaissance woman ahead of her time who lived her life by the creed of *"Trust, Respect, and Responsibility."*

During the late 70s when her husband Charley was the Charleston Club president, Irene was the Club's Den

Mother for the group, the Fields hosted numerous club meetings and the club's summer picnic at their home in Ft. Washington. Everyone knew that a meeting (picnic) at the Fields was a chance for "good food" (Charleston style) and lots of fun!

Irene Wright Fields is survived by her five children; Charles E. Fields II, Zulkifl III, Karen E. Fields, Alan E. Fields, and Kirk E. Fields. Ten grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and a host of loving nieces, nephews, and cousins. And countless devoted friends. Funeral services were held Thursday November 21st at Henson Valley Christian Church in Ft. Washington, MD. Mrs. Irene W. Fields will be interred alongside her husband at Arlington National Cemetery at a later date.

Rosa Parks Statue Unveiled in Montgomery

A statue of civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks was unveiled on Dec. 1st in Montgomery. The event was scheduled to coincide with this date in 1955 when Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on a public bus to a white man. Her arrest sparked the *Montgomery Bus Boycott*, a pivotal moment in the civil rights movement. The statue is located at Montgomery Plaza near the Court Street Fountain, in Montgomery. It is placed approximately 30 feet from the spot where Parks is believed to have boarded the infamous bus.



Along with the Parks memorial, the city will present two historic markers for Browder v. Gayle – the landmark case that ruled segregation on Montgomery buses unconstitutional. Alabama lawmakers in 2018 voted to name Dec. 1 as Mrs. Rosa L. Parks Day in the state. Rosa L. Parks also has a 2013 bronze sculpture depicting the African-American civil rights activist installed in the National Statuary Hall.

World's First Black Fighter Pilot Honored at Museum of Aviation

Before the Tuskegee Airmen blazed the trail for black military pilots, there was Columbus, GA, native Eugene Bullard. During World War I, while fighting for France, he became the world's first black fighter pilot. On October 9th, what would have been his 124th birthday, hundreds of people honored him at the Museum of Aviation Warner Robins, GA.

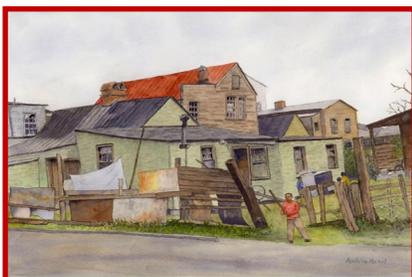
A life-sized bronze statue of Bullard was unveiled. Bullard was born in Columbus in 1865, but racial tensions led him to run away from home at an early age, according

to a history presented at the ceremony. He took odd jobs along the East Coast, then stowed away on a freighter to France. He joined the French Army when World War I broke out and was in some of the worst fighting. He was severely wounded. After his recovery, he couldn't join the infantry again but was given the chance to be a pilot. He went on to have at least two confirmed kills of enemy aircraft. He was awarded 15 medals. German enemies nicknamed him "The Black Swallow of Death."

He was denied the chance to fly in the U.S. military because of his race. He also fought briefly for France in World War II and returned to the U.S. after he was injured. He died of cancer in New York in 1961. In 1994, President Bill Clinton posthumously made him a second lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force.

Charleston Artist Paints Lost Homes

Andrea Hazel was a teenager when the Crosstown highway was built. The road project required a wide clearance down the neck of the Charleston peninsula and then across to the



Ashley River. The problem was that this was a residential area full of houses. At least 150 of them would be demolished to make way for Interstate 26 and the Crosstown, constructed during the middle 1960s.

Hazel watched it happen from her home on Ashley Avenue. She watched as the plans were laid and the bulldozers did their work. She watched as families were forced to seek refuge elsewhere. She watched as old Charleston neighborhoods — Elliottborough, North-Central and the Westside, each full of single-family homes and small businesses ~ were ruptured by the roadway.

"Our church (Immaculate Conception Catholic Church) used to be on Sheppard Street," she recalled. "Now it's the Crosstown." The infrastructure project was completed by the end of 1968. This was the era of school desegregation, and white residents on the upper part of Charleston's peninsula already were moving to the suburbs. The Crosstown project accelerated White Flight, depressing property values and exacerbating the city's racial divide.

A few years ago, Hazel came across a trove of photographs kept in the Margaretta Childs Archives at the Historic Charleston Foundation. These were images of the soon-to-be demolished houses, many featuring the surveyors who assessed the properties and determined their fate. A few included homeowners: women drying clothes on the line, children playing in the yard, men wondering at the purpose of the clipboards and measuring tape. Hazel was captivated by the pictures of her old stomping grounds, and decided to put her brush to work. She painted one watercolor, then another, then another. "The idea

was not to point a finger and blame, but to show what happened, and to remember these places," she said. She has made eight paintings so far in her series "How It Was: Charleston in 1963," and hopes to reach at least 20.

"It's really a great thing she's doing," said Karen Emmons, archivist and librarian at the Historic Charleston Foundation. "To me, they bring the photos to life, so I get a sense of human beings living in those houses." Emmons said the entire archive contains nearly 2,300 images, of which 602 are of properties affected by the I-26 and Crosstown construction.

Hazel said the DOT photographs "speak to me." She knew instantly she needed to paint some of them. Who lived there? What were these residents thinking when they saw the surveyors in their yards, arms spread wide? "It creates a dialogue for me, and I hope other people see it too." Hazel, the oldest of six children, graduated from I.C.S. (1966) and attended college in New York, majored in math and became a school teacher. Along the way, she took an art appreciation class and visited her first museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art. "I was just blown away," she recalled of the experience. She graduated from college in 1970. Seven years later, she picked up a camera for the first time. She became a volunteer photographer for the Piccolo Spoleto Festival. Eventually, people asked her to document private events, so she started a small photography business. Hazel was busy, teaching at Trident Technical College and shooting weddings on the weekends, when, in 2001, a friend at church gave her a gift for her 53rd birthday: watercolor paint (set) and brushes. The man, Frank Hamilton, was worried that Hazel was overtaxing herself, and that watercolor painting would relax her. A few years later, they were married, and Hazel was a dedicated painter. She took classes at the College of Charleston to hone her technique. In 2005, she retired from teaching after 30 years. In 2008, she shut down her photo business.

She is fascinated by the intersection of art and community and determined to capture in watercolor the character and the history of the place she calls home. "I want to remind people who we are," she said. "This Charleston is a very special place. I don't want to throw out everything we had." ~ *Charleston News & Courier*

First African-American FBI Agent Finally Recognized 100 Years after Being Hired



James Wormley Jones (Sept. 22, 1884 – Dec. 11, 1958) was an African-American policeman and World War I veteran, and is best known for having been the first African-American FBI special agent. After 100 years, the FBI has finally recognized James W. Jones as the agency's first African-American special agent. He was appointed in December 19th in 1919 just 11 years after the creation of the organization

that ultimately evolved into the Federal Bureau of Investigation. He began his career, however, in 1905 as a police officer in Washington, DC.

Jones was born in Fort Monroe, VA. At a young age he moved with his family to Cambridge, Massachusetts where he completed his early education. He would return to Virginia where he took up studies at Norfolk Mission College and a year later went to complete his education at Virginia Union University.

Jones began service with the Washington Metropolitan Police Department in January 1905. He rose from being a footman to a horseman then a motorcycle policeman. His work resulted in being promoted to detective. During this time he and his wife Ethel T. (Peters) Jones became the parents of three children. In 1917 Jones joined the United States Army. He was trained as an officer at the Officers' Training School in Des Moines, Iowa. Once his training was complete he was given a commission as a Captain. He was assigned to the 368th Infantry Regiment (United States), 92nd Division in command of Company F.

Jones was appointed as the first African-American special agent on November 19, 1919 by Bureau of Investigation director A. Bruce Bielaski. Jones was assigned to a new section of the Justice Department created to track the activities of groups perceived as subversive. His work there was under the direct supervision of J. Edgar Hoover. During his time in the FBI, Jones served in New York City and Pittsburgh. In New York he was assigned to infiltrate the Universal Negro Improvement Association under the leadership of Marcus Garvey. Although he was seeking evidence of subversive activities during the "Red Scare" of 1919, Jones' work led to the arrest and trial of Garvey on mail fraud charges.

Groundbreaking for Expanded African American Civil War Museum

In the 400th year since the first enslaved Africans reached the shores of America, a groundbreaking in the nation's Capital has begun a monumental \$45 million expansion of a facility to honor Black veterans of the Civil War – slaves and descendants of slaves – who literally fought their way to freedom. “You all know that we started this African American Civil War Museum for two purposes – one was to correct a great wrong in history, which pretty much ignored the contributions of African-American soldiers ending slavery and keeping America united under one flag,” Dr. Frank Smith, executive director and founder of the African American Civil War Museum, told a packed house in D.C.'s historic Shaw neighborhood on Oct. 17th.

Smith continued the brief history lesson before the rapt audience: “When the Civil War started, African-Americans had no pathway to citizenship in the United States. We were defined in the Constitution as being chat-



tel slaves. And every court decision from that point up to the Civil War reinforced our position and our status in society. We don't get a chance to fight for our freedom until Lincoln gets himself caught up in a war that he can't win without doing something about slavery. And so he ended up enlisting two hundred thousand Blacks in the Union Army. The nation paid no attention to these soldiers until we built a monument to them.”

Just across the street from the museum, which is housed in the historic Grimke School building on Vermont Avenue NorthWest, is a bronze memorial, a statue of three soldiers standing guard. The statue is surrounded by a wall with the carvings of 209,145 names of those who served among the United States Colored Troops. That museum and memorial – fixtures in the U Street community for the past 21 years – are about to undergo a \$45 million expansion project that will accomplish the second purpose for which the museum was built. In addition to providing greater space for artifacts and programs to honor the Black soldiers, it is expected to create an economic boom in the once depressed area as people come from across the nation to visit the historic spot.

“We wanted to find a way to get tourism into this community. We get 20 million tourists in the city every year,” said Smith, a former Ward 1 councilman, who envisioned and founded the museum in 1992. “They spend \$6 – \$10 billion dollars every year Downtown. So it's pretty easy if we can find a way to get them here and spend some of that money up here in this neighborhood,” he said. D. C. Mayor Muriel Bowser and her staff, helping with the ground breaking, led the way to the new beginning for the project after several pauses due to stormy political waters and budget problems over the years. The grand opening is finally set to take place in the fall of 2020.

Charleston Club Tattler ~ One liners ...

- ◆ The Charleston Club has decided to host its holiday celebration in January with a gathering for a lunch buffet on Saturday, January 11th at the **Golden Corral** located at 2800 Crain Highway, in Waldorf, MD. Members are asked to arrive at 12 noon since we are required to depart at 2 p.m. See you in the New Year!
- ◆ After the Nov. 5 election ended in a runoff; because neither candidate reached the total of 50% plus one, a runoff was required. The results of the Nov. 19th runoff between **Mayor John Tecklenburg** and **Councilman Mike Seekings**, the final votes are in and the City of Charleston has officially re-elected its mayor. Tecklenburg won with 11,750 votes (61.84%) compared to Seekings' 7,252 (38.16%).

Deaths:

- ◆ **Ms. Yasmin Gray** beloved sister of Charleston Club member **Brenda Owens** received her heavenly wings on Saturday, October 26, 2019 after a lengthy illness. Funeral Services were held Wednesday, November 6th at Real Power A.M.E. Church on Old Indian Head Road in Upper Marlboro, MD.

◆ **Lauretta Gordon Drummond** was born in Charleston on August 18, 1943 and transitioned on October 28, 2019 in Charleston; she was 76 years old. She was the daughter of the late Clarence J. Gordon and Flossie White Gordon, and is survived by her sister, Cecelia Gordon Rogers (Jimmie). Lauretta graduated from Burke High School in 1961 and earned the associate degree in business from the Lewis College of Business in Detroit, MI. It was the first historically black college in Michigan (1928), specializing in business related topics and closed in 2013. Lauretta traveled extensively, lived in Madrid, Spain and returned to Charleston in the early 1970s. She was employed by WPAL and WZJY radio stations in Charleston and held several managerial positions in the entertainment industry. She worked behind the scenes with local promoters to bring gospel entertainment to the trident area. She was passionate about working for African American owned radio stations with an emphasis on gospel music.

◆ **Leroy Lewis, Jr.**, the son of Leroy and Anna Lewis spent his life in service to others. Even as a young boy growing up on Radcliffe Street, people would bring him injured and abandoned animals to care for. They recognized his passion and respect for all life. Gardening was always in his blood, as he partnered with nature to celebrate the renewing of life. He was an unassuming people person and mixed well in any gathering. He was a conduit and confidant that allowed others to channel their concerns and find a resolution. He brought light into dark places, expressed his opinions freely and honestly, but never imposed them upon others.

Leroy was a 1967 graduate of Burke H.S. and matriculated at Bishop College in Dallas, TX where he earned the Bachelor of Science degree in 1971. He entered the U.S. Army upon graduation and served in Berlin, West Germany as a military policeman and drug counselor with the Office of the Chaplain. He also began his teaching career at the Berlin/American High School prior to leaving the Army. He earned the Master of Education in Secondary School Administration and Supervision from the Citadel in 1980. Leroy taught in the public schools of Charleston (Garrett H.S.), Colleton County (Walterboro H.S.) and in the District of Columbia (Spingarn H.S.) where he was selected as the Teacher of the Year in 1989. He hosted a youth-center show entitled “Student Symposium” for two years on the DC Public Schools TV Cable Network. Leroy taught English as a second language in Seoul, South Korea during the 1991 teacher exchange program and conducted teacher training with the Fulbright Teacher Exchange Program through the American University Fulbright Program. Leroy spent more than thirty-five years working with the Upward Bound Program at the College of Charleston and at Howard University, helping first – generation and under – served young men and women to enter colleges and universities across America.

◆ **Trustee James Wade, Jr.** was the father of Charleston

Club member **Audrey Dudley** (Clarence), he was 103 years old at the time of his transition. He received his early public school education in Sumter before moving to the D.C. area and attending Armstrong Technical High School after “The War.” James Wade served in U.S. Army (Ft. Bragg, NC) from August 1941 until September 1945 (Ft. Jackson, SC) those were the World War II years for the country. The WWII veteran came to the Washington area from Boykin, SC in 1945, and truly made a name of himself. In 1948 he and his wife Isabelle Hunter had a June wedding at Greater New Hope Baptist Church. The couple had five children: Glenda, James, Cynthia, Sheila and Audrey. When Mrs. Isabelle Hunter Wade died in 1965, James Wade, Jr. rose to the occasion and accepted the role of both father and mother in their lives. Eventually, he had to hire help to assist with the chores of five children.

In 1968 James Wade re-married, Constance “Connie” Thompson and the family became a whole again. James and Connie were members of The Way of the Cross Church of Christ (4th and Virginia Ave.) in Washington, their strong belief in God increased. He had three particular gifts; the gift of prayer, wisdom and finance. He used them as a church monitor, member of the Usher Board, the Deacon Board and the Trustee Board. Trustee, James Wade, Jr. died November 8th, “A Celebration of Life for a Man of Integrity” were held Sunday, November 17th at the new The Way of the Cross Church of Christ in Capitol Height, MD. Trustee, James Wade, Jr. will be interred at Arlington National Cemetery at a later date.

◆ **Ernest A. Murray, Sr.**, (June 22, 1941 ~ November 11, 2019) a graduate of Burke High School 1960 died on November 11th in Charleston. The founder of Murray's Links & Sausages on Meeting Street in North Charleston, he became a Deacon at The Royal Baptist Church in North Charleston, SC. Funeral Services were Monday, November 18th, at The Royal Baptist Church in North Charleston. Deacon Ernest Alphonso Murray, Sr. was also a member of Masonic Lodge, Lilly Works Lodge #310 in Charleston. He was the grandfather of 31 grandchildren and 24 great-grandchildren. Deacon Murray was an entrepreneur and founder of Murray's Meats; he was 78 years old.

Happy Birthdays!

December 2019 Birthdays:

William Perry - Dec. 4th ~ Allan Raphael - Dec. 8th ~ Rhonda G. Barnes - Dec. 9th ~ Adrienne M. MacBeth - Dec. 17th ~ Dolores M. Abrams - Dec. 20th.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

- The Fly on The Wall I