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Judge Bernard R. Fielding Dies

Bernard Fielding – A Charleston Legend Dies at 88

The Honorable Bernard Rodolph Fielding, Sr. (Sept. 1, 1932 ~ Oct. 9, 2020), a longtime Charleston-area judge, lawyer, funeral director and social justice activist, died Oct. 9th in Charleston; he was 88 years old. Bernard Fielding was a monumental figure in the civil rights movement in South Carolina and a trailblazer in the state's legal field. He was appointed associate probate judge in Charleston County in 1976, becoming the first African American to hold that position in the state. In 1990, Fielding became the first African American elected Charleston County probate judge.



Fielding was born in Charleston, where his father opened *Fielding Home for Funerals* in 1912. In 1928, the family business moved to one of its three present locations at 122 Logan St. It would become Charleston's oldest Black-owned business. Fielding would show a strong and early interest in law. After graduating from Avery Normal School (June 1949), he attended Hampton Institute (now University) in Virginia. After he graduated from his beloved Hampton Institute in 1953, he spent two years in the U.S. Army and while stationed in Boston, MA completed law school at Boston University in 1958. He recalled while a law student nearing graduation, he applied for a job as an insurance adjuster. The white man who interviewed him eventually told Fielding that the company wouldn't hire a colored insurance adjuster. "I was about to graduate from one of the finest institutions in the country and I wasn't good enough to be an insurance adjuster," he related. That was among many experiences that compelled Fielding to use his skills for the cause of civil rights. Bernard returned home after law school and worked as a legal professional during the day and helped run the family funeral home at night and on weekends.

His wife, Conchita Lawson Fielding remembers the days, she would often assist her husband by typing up legal paperwork for those in jail. She recalls one night in particular when young protesters, including her nephew, were arrested. Inside her King Street home, Conchita Fielding heard the students singing a hymn. "I could hear them singing on the bus 'We Shall Overcome' as they were on their way to jail." Bernard Fielding continued to denounce injustices throughout the 1970s; when he and friends took a stance against the state Democratic Party during the party's convention on segregation of public schools.

Fielding would continue to make an impact in the Charleston region in the following decades, inspiring fu-

ture generations of lawyers and activists. He will be remembered for his commitment to economic empowerment and social justice, providing a model for other legal professionals to follow... "we have lost a giant of the civil rights movement." Fielding was a member of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and the Sigma Phi Phi Fraternity (The Boulé), he was awarded with the 2012 Living Legends of Funeral Service Award and was inducted into the African American Funeral Service History Museum. Fielding was president of the South Carolina Colored Funeral Directors and Embalmers Association, a member of the South Carolina Morticians Association, and the National Funeral Directors and Morticians Association, where he served as general counsel.

He is survived by his wife of sixty three (63) years, Conchita Lawson Fielding, son, Bernard R. Fielding, Jr. (Jaycie), daughter, Constance F. Fielding, two granddaughters, two great-grandsons, and a host of other relatives, and friends. Graveside Services were held Saturday, October 17th at Unity and Friendship Cemetery, on Cunningham Avenue, in N. Charleston.

Martha Lou's Kitchen Closes After 37 Years!



Martha Lou's Kitchen, which was vaulted to international fame by well-placed soul food fans, has served its last plate of fried chicken. The shop at 1068 Morrison Drive closed Sept. 1st, following the sale of the iconic pink building that housed Martha Lou Gadsden's celebrated cooking for 37 years. According to Gadsden's granddaughter, Melanie Alston, the building is slated for demolition.

Martha Lou Gadsden was born in 1930 in Charleston but grew up in Manning, SC with her grandparents. Years later, Martha Lou moved back to Charleston where she worked part time to support her nine children. Started in the restaurant business as a bus girl, she eventually moved her way up to waitress, and then cook. During segregation, Martha Lou worked in popular establishments such as the Ladson House (President Street) and the Dee Dex Snack Bar. At 53 years old, Martha Lou decided it was

time to try her hand at opening her own restaurant. She rented an old service station and the doors to Martha Lou's Kitchen opened in 1983.

Gadsden, 90, apparently isn't overly concerned about being displaced after decades of renting. "It's her retirement age," said Alston. "But she is going to miss doing business." Business barely dropped off following the onset of the coronavirus. "We did well during the pandemic," Alston said, attributing the ongoing success to the restaurant's overwhelming popularity and facility with takeout items such as turkey wings, lima beans, baked chicken and collard greens. Martha Lou's will continue to offer catering services and the family is discussing whether to eventually reopen the restaurant in another location. "If we're going to have something else independently, we're going to revisit that in six months to a year," said Alston, who for two years ran Martha Lou's Kitchen #2 in North Charleston.



In a 2016 oral history interview with the Southern Foodways Alliance, Gadsden said she started her restaurant career as a waitress at the legendary Ladson House Restaurant on President Street in the late 1960s when her nine children were old enough to take care of themselves. She opened her own restaurant in 1983 in a converted (old) service station, selling hot dogs and soda pop. But Gadsden was eager to distinguish her kitchen from the snack bars around town, so soon switched to making the kind of home-cooked dishes she could create again and again without consulting a recipe, such as smothered pork chops and okra soup. Still, she admitted her repertoire wasn't complete. She wasn't satisfied with her biscuits, so instead served sweetened Jiffy cornbread at her restaurant. "I like what I do and I do what I like, and if I didn't like it, it would be a drudgery, but I like it," Gadsden told the interviewer. "I don't never get up in the morning and say, 'Oh, Lord; I don't know what today going to be.' I get up with a meaningful attitude. I'm ready to go - ready to go. As long as I can go, I'm going."

Food critic; Brock's affection for Martha Lou's and its owner was documented in a 2011 New York Times column, which concluded, "In the cosmology of Southern cooking, Martha Lou's is no dwarf planet. It is close to the sun itself." Then-critic Sam Sifton's praise incited a torrent of additional press coverage: Bon Appetit characterized the restaurant as worthy of a pilgrimage and Southern Living hailed it for upholding Gullah Geechee cooking traditions. By 2016, the influx of tourist traffic was so intense that Gadsden was able to hike her prices, charging \$14 for a meat-and-three plate which previously cost \$8.50. "Everybody goes crazy over the chicken," she told Southern Living. "I don't know what it is about the chicken."

Nobody was more surprised by the far-reaching acclaim for Martha Lou's than Gadsden, Alston says, describing her grandmother as humble. Even after multiple television appearances she had trouble believing that custom-

ers would come all the way from Ohio for a menu listing chitterlings and mystery meat. Once, Alston said, her grandmother took a call from a soul food appreciator in England. He wanted to know if he needed to make a reservation in advance of his upcoming trip. He was assured there would be room for him at Martha Lou's.

Thank you Ms. Martha Lou for keeping the tradition of Lowcountry/Gullah cuisine alive. We are all better for having your doors open for so long, reminding people what the Lowcountry is about. Final portrait is from Southern Living.

General Charles Bolden Receives NAA 2020 Award

The National Aeronautic Association (NAA) announced (Sept. 9th) that Major General Charles F. Bolden, Jr. USMC (Ret.) has been selected as the recipient of the 2020 Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy for ... "his impassioned commitment to public service in aviation and aerospace as an aviator, astronaut, and leader and his dedication to excellence for the advancement of all humanity." Established by NAA in 1948 to honor the memory of Orville and Wilbur Wright, the trophy is awarded annually to a living American for "... significant public service of enduring value to aviation in the United States." One of the most important, historic, and visible aerospace awards in the world, the Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy reflects a timeline of the most innovative inventors, explorers, industrialists, and public servants in aeronautics and astronautics.



Bolden was born and raised in Columbia, SC; both of his parents, Charles F. Bolden, Sr. and Ethel Martin Bolden (Charleston native), were teachers and stressed the importance of education. Following graduation from C. A. Johnson High School in 1964, he was appointed to the U.S. Naval Academy after writing to then-President Lyndon Johnson directly because his Senators and Congressman refused to nominate him. At the Naval Academy, Bolden became the President of his class. He received his B.S. in electrical science and later earned his M.S. in systems management from the University of Southern California.

After graduating from the Naval Academy in 1968, Bolden was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Marine Corps. After completing flight training, Bolden became a Naval Aviator. During the Vietnam War, Bolden flew over 100 combat missions between 1972 and 1973. Several years later, Bolden graduated from the U.S. Naval Test Pilot School. As a test pilot, Bolden flew numerous test projects in various aircraft. He logged more than 6,000 hours flying time during his active military career. Beginning in 1980, Bolden spent 14 years as an Astronaut with NASA. He ventured into space a total of four times as part of NASA's Space Shuttle program, including two missions as the Pilot and two as Mission Commander. Bolden first served as Pilot on the Space Shuttle Columbia in 1986. In

the wake of the Challenger disaster, he was assigned as the Chief of the Safety Division. In 1990, he piloted the Space Shuttle Discovery during its mission to deploy the Hubble Space Telescope. Bolden left NASA and returned to the operating forces of the U.S. Marine Corps in 1994, and was assigned as the Deputy Commandant of Midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy. During Operation Desert Thunder-Kuwait in 1998, he was assigned as the Commanding General of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. That same year, he was promoted to Major General. Bolden retired from the Marine Corps in 2003 after commanding the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

Bolden eventually went on to become the Administrator of NASA from 2009 to 2017. He is the first and, to date, the only Senate-confirmed African-American to hold that post. As NASA Administrator, Bolden led the agency in the development of the powerful Space Launch System rocket and the Orion spacecraft, which are the foundations for future space missions beyond Earth's orbit. He also supported the development of commercial space transportation systems within the United States, including their use to resupply the International Space Station. Other achievements include presiding over the landing of the Mars Curiosity Rover in 2012 and the Juno spacecraft's entry into Jupiter's orbit in 2016, as well as preparation for the launch of the James Webb Space Telescope. During his last five years as Administrator, NASA was consistently named the "Best Place to Work" among large federal agencies by the Partnership for Public Service. Bolden retired as NASA Administrator in January 2017.

"The Wright Brothers Memorial Trophy is our greatest individual honor," said NAA President Greg Principato. "When you take into account Charlie Bolden's career and commitment, he truly embodies what this award is meant to recognize. In every aspect of his career he has served causes and missions greater than himself. His example will inspire future generations."

Bolden is married to the former Alexis (Jackie) Walker of Columbia, and the couple have two adult children; U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Anthony Che Bolden, and Kelly Michelle Bolden, M.D.

Gullah Society Celebrates of Life for Late Founder

Ade Ofunniyin, the founder and director of the Gullah Society and a beloved College of Charleston professor, died Wednesday, Oct. 7th in Charleston; he was 67 years old. Ofunniyin, referred to as Dr. O by students at the College, was a staunch advocate for the Gullah and Black communities in the academic world and beyond.



Born in Charleston, Ofunniyin was the grandson of famed Charleston blacksmith Phillip Simmons, whose historic ironwork is seen throughout the city. Ofunniyin spent his teens and 20s away from Charleston before mov-

ing back in 1985 to "meet my destiny," as he said. "Although I physically left Charleston at age 7, my spirit and my heart were enjoined to the soul of this holy city," he wrote. After his return, Ofunniyin began an apprenticeship at his grandfather's blacksmith shop. He would go on to receive his master's degree in archaeology and his PhD in anthropology from the University of Florida. After completing his studies, Ofunniyin returned to Charleston once again and founded the Gullah Society to celebrate, research and protect Gullah history and culture.

Throughout the past decade, the Gullah Society's projects have spanned from documenting and preserving burial grounds across the city to hosting art exhibitions on the African diaspora. In an email sent to College of Charleston students, Professor Kristi Brian remembered Ofunniyin's strides toward antiracism and his encouraging words to students. "He was resolute about his role on this campus — to make freedom fighters, revolutionaries, culture shifters! He affirmed unapologetic Blackness! He demanded that white students recognize their grave responsibility for ending oppression. He nudged anyone he met toward their hidden power. He asked us all to live as boldly as he did. Few of us ever will."

In an August interview with the *City Paper* for a story about reparations for descendants of enslaved Africans, Ofunniyin described societal changes he'd like to see in Charleston. "I would like to see more Black businesses. I would like to see the International African American Museum (IAAM) become a true site for the community, to learn and for visitors and the public to come in to learn the true history of Charleston and the contributions made by African people and their descendants. I'd like to see that. I'd like to see the curriculum in our schools advanced in a way that informs our young people about true history, what's going on presently and provide an opportunity for them to imagine a future for themselves. We're so caught up in the moment. Young people don't have the opportunity to think about a future. You ask them, ask any young person, 'What's your dream for the future?' Many will tell you that they have no idea."

The Gullah Society came together Saturday, October 10th to celebrate the life of their founder Dr. Ajani Ade Ofunniyin with graveside services in N. Charleston.

Duke Names Bldg after Black Woman for 1st time

Wilhelmina Matilda Reuben was born in Georgetown, SC, into a family of educators, with both her parents having worked in academia. She was the oldest of six children. Her father, the late Reverend Dr. Odell R. Reuben, was President of Morris College; her mother, the late Dr. Anna Mays Daniels Reuben, was a professor there. She attended public schools in Sumter and graduated from the Mather High School (The Mather School 1868-1968) a



Christian boarding school in Beaufort in 1963. In her earlier years, Reuben-Cooke was active in the civil rights movement while she was also attending Duke University. After graduation from Duke in 1967, she married her soulmate Air Force 1st Lt. Edmund D. Cooke, Jr. of Springfield, OH in June 1968; they were married for 51 years and reared two daughters.

She earned a law degree from the University of Michigan in 1973. Later she would supervise litigation for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and federal courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court. She then went on to become a law professor and administrator at Syracuse University and the University of the District of Columbia but stayed close to her roots at Duke serving on its Board of Trustees and earning the university's Distinguished Alumni Award in 2011. Years later, she's finally getting her recognition from the university that shaped her into the historic figure she's grown to be... "When the building that now bears Professor Reuben-Cooke's name first opened, she would not have been allowed to enter it as a student," President Price shared in an email. "From this day forward, anyone who passes through its doors will carry on her legacy of accomplishment, engagement and lasting impact."

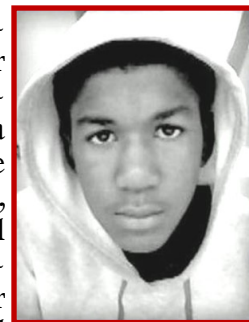
Along her journey Reuben-Cooke served on numerous community, civic and professional boards, including The Duke Endowment. She was a member of Phi Beta Kappa Society (the nation's oldest and most prestigious honors organization for more than 244 years [est. Dec. 5, 1776]). She was a life-time member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and the Links, Inc.

Prof. Reuben-Cooke never lost ties to the places she built and that helped build her, serving on numerous community, civic and professional boards to maintain those ties. She was a Professor Emerita of Syracuse University. She was a two-term trustee on the Duke University Board of Trustees and a member of The Duke Endowment. Duke, in turn, has not forgotten Prof. Reuben-Cooke, either. She received the Duke University Distinguished Alumni Award in 2011; the Duke Alumni Association's highest award is given to "Duke graduates who have made significant contributions in their fields, in service to the university, or for the betterment of humanity." Years later, the university established a \$1 million scholarship fund to honor the professor and her fellow first African American Duke Undergraduates. She also remained connected to her hometown in South Carolina as a member of the Mather School National Alumni Association (MSNAA); she was president of the MSNAA's Washington D.C. Chapter.

Trayvon Martin Memorialized With Street Naming

"His name and image are recognized across the world and associated with the fight for social justice." The senseless murder of 17-year-old **Trayvon Martin** (February 26, 2012 in Sanford, FL) ignited a movement for racial justice that reverberated across the world and now 8 years after his harrowing death his hometown is ensuring his legacy

is kept alive. The street located outside of Dr. Michael M. Krop Senior High; the school that Martin attended before he was tragically killed; a portion of the road will become **Trayvon Martin Avenue**. Martin, who was a junior in high school when he was killed, planned on attending **Florida A&M University** or the **University of Miami** and wanted to pursue a career in the aviation industry.



Charleston Club One-liners:

♦ **Be sure you Vote on November 3rd !!!**

♦ Due to Coronavirus crisis, **the Nov. 14th Charleston Club meeting will be via tele-conference (Zoom) at 2:00 p.m.** An e-mail has been sent with info... phone # **301 715 8592** Meeting ID: **831 2464 9126**, Passcode: **013587**.

♦ The **International African American Museum (IAAM)** is extending invitations to become members. Please consider joining the IAAM, visit: <https://iaamuseum.org/membership/> for details. The IAAM will be the journey of millions of Africans, captured and forced across the Atlantic in the grueling and inhumane Middle Passage, who arrived at Gadsden's Wharf in Charleston and other ports in the Atlantic World. Their labor, resistance and ingenuity and that of their descendants shaped every aspect of our NEW world.

♦ Internet sales are going through the roof...we are buying personalized college, Greek and various types of face masks, caps and school paraphernalia...here are two websites that might be of interest for Christmas: Burke H.S. <https://bulldognationalum.bigcartel.com/> and face masks at <https://rockemsocks.com/>

♦ **PBS** has shown an excellent 2 hour documentary twice in October (13th and 26th), it is also scheduled for a November showing. It details how the advent of the automobile brought new mobility and freedom for African Americans, but also exposed them to discrimination and deadly violence, and how that history resonates today. Chronicling the riveting history and personal experiences of African Americans on the road from the advent of the automobile through the seismic changes of the 1960s and beyond – "**Driving While Black**" explores the deep background of a recent phrase rooted in realities that have been an indelible part of the African American experience for hundreds of years – told in large part through the stories of the men, women and children who lived through it!

Happy Birthdays!

November 2020 Birthdays:

Adrienne Bennett - Nov. 5th ~ **Elnora Capers** - Nov. 7th ~
Vashti Washington - Nov. 7th ~ **Hazel Seaberry** - Nov. 15th
 ~ **Terrence Fields** - Nov. 18th ~ **Joseph Cohen** - Nov. 29th.
 ~ *The Fly on The Wall!*