



Richard R. Spencer

November 10, 1941 - September 2, 2023

Just before the close of the day, on Saturday, September 2, 2023, surrounded by family and friends, the person known for the daily catch phrase, “Have Mercy”, peacefully passed away.

Dr. Richard Ralph Spencer’s journey of life began on November 10, 1941 to the late Richard Rothrow Spencer and the late Lenora Frances Festus Spencer, in Upland, Pennsylvania. He is preceded in death by his sister, Ethel Lorraine Smith and his brother, Francis Isaac “Ike” Spencer. HAVE MERCY!

Dr. Richard Ralph Spencer, affectionately called “Ritt” by family, was the third child and oldest boy of four children. Ritt had 5 first cousins who gave him overwhelming love, support, and protection when he was growing up, which created mutual brotherly and sisterly bonds. HAVE MERCY!

Ritt grew up in Morton, PA, where he attended Phyllis Wheatly Elementary School from first grade to eighth grade. In 1955, Ritt enrolled at Ridley Township High School, where he joined the school band and played the bass and kettle drums. After his family moved to West Philadelphia in 1956, Ritt transferred to West Philadelphia High School from which he graduated in 1959. HAVE MERCY!

Ritt accepted Christ at an early age and was baptized at First Baptist Church

of Morton, in Morton, Pennsylvania. HAVE MERCY!

Ritt later transferred his church membership to Mt. Carmel Baptist Church under the pastorate of the late Rev. D. W. Hoggard. Ritt was a member of the choir. Ritt loved Mt. Carmel's Choir. He loved listening to the choir's music, especially when Mr. Hester was directing. His cousin Lori (Delores May) made sure Ritt had lots of tape recordings of songs sung by Mt. Carmel's Choir. Ritt remained a member of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church until his passing. HAVE MERCY!

Ritt attended Morgan State College, which later became Morgan State University. Ritt secured an ROTC scholarship and a partial scholarship from Mt. Carmel Baptist Church. Ritt also received love and financial support from his Aunt Grace B. Holliday "Aunt Grace", Uncle Leroy Holliday "Uncle Roy", and their children known as his cousin siblings, Jackie, Jean, Isabelle "Pouch", Maurice "Sonny", and Marshall "Bubby". HAVE MERCY!

After high school, Ritt affectionately became "Spence" to his friends, which carried on throughout his professional career. During Spence's time at Morgan he developed several significant relationships and networking opportunities that included but not limited to, joining the Morgan State Political institute, the Nixon-Kennedy campaign, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the NAACP, and numerous organizations and activities that made his family wonder if he was "really a student or a Civil Rights person." HAVE MERCY!

While at Morgan, Spence was also fortunate to meet Jackie Robinson, former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, the Kennedys, former President Linden Johnson, and the president of Johns Hopkins University, Dr. Milton Eisenhower. As a result of the political atmosphere on campus, Spence joined the Southern Christian Leadership Organization led by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther

King Jr., whom Spence met in Chester, PA, when Dr. King preached and attended Crozer Theological Seminary. In 1964, Spence graduated from Morgan State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and a Minor in Psychology. HAVE MERCY!

Spence wanted to continue his education at another Historically Black College University (HBCU). In 1964, he applied to Howard University Law School and was admitted, but did not receive the scholarship he was promised. Spence met with the Dean of Social Work at Howard. Spence was offered a full scholarship to Howard's School of Social Work. While attending Howard University, Spence was initiated into the Kappa Psi chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated, in 1966. The fraternity had a significant impact on Spence's life and he developed lifelong bonds that continued throughout his final days. In 1966, Spence successfully graduated from Howard University with a Master's of Social Work degree. HAVE MERCY!

Shortly after graduating from Howard University, Spence joined the U.S. Army with the rank of Second Lieutenant. Spence was later promoted to First Lieutenant and then to Captain. Spence was first assigned to Walter Reed Army Hospital in Washington D.C.. At Walter Reed, Spence's primary training focused on treating and training soldiers returning from Vietnam. Spence was stationed in Fort Bragg, NC. While in the Army, Spence was successful in developing a treatment approach to respond to the issue of military suicide. After Spence left the Army, he was awarded the United States Army Medal of Commendation for developing such a successful treatment approach for soldiers serving in Vietnam. HAVE MERCY!

On September 14, 1968, he married Anita Jeanne Matthews. This almost 55-year union produced three children and seven grandchildren. HAVE MERCY!

In 1979, Spence was accepted into the Doctorate of Social Work (D.S.W.) program at the University of Pennsylvania. As a D.S.W. student, Spence was allowed to develop his own curriculum. He focused his studies on clinical, psychological, and law coursework. This academic coursework allowed Spence to study under some famous and scholarly professors, such as Judge A. Higginbotham Jr. in Penn's Law School and Judge Phyllis Beck. Judge Phyllis Beck invited Spence to join her in teaching a graduate class on Child Abuse. After raising 3 children and working fulltime in his career, in 1991, Spence graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with a Doctorate of Social Work degree. HAVE MERCY!

Dr. Richard R. Spencer, ACSW, DLCSW has had an impressive fifty-year career that included instructing and advising graduate students at Delaware State University. After many years of developing and running social service agencies in Chester, PA, his proudest career moment was starting his own foster care agency in Chester. The agency was named, "Shabriawn Social Services", after his three children Shawla ("Sha"), Brian ("bri"), and Dawn ("awn"). Dr. Spencer owned and operated Shabriawn. Dr. Spencer's final work and retirement occurred when he was a Professor at Delaware County Community College. He worked until he could no longer teach. HAVE MERCY!

As a family man, Ritt would have fun with his wife and children by telling jaw dropping stories of his mischievous and devilish adolescent years. Ritt loved to dance. He would do the Bop, and the Slop, while sliding and twisting on the dance floor at banquets and weddings. He even taught his daughters how to properly dance the Bop. Ritt loved sharing stories about his Partying Days and stories about the many times he danced on the television show "American Bandstand". Ritt loved music and had an extensive album collection containing various genres of music. HAVE MERCY!

Ritt loved playing Croquet with his family. He loved cheating. When he became “poison”, he didn’t hesitate to hit other family members’ balls to eliminate them, INCLUDING HIS OWN CHILDREN. Ritt, also, enjoyed the pool parties and Family Reunions at his brother Ike’s house. HAVE MERCY!

Ritt and Nita were supportive parents of their children’s activities in dance, track, football, basketball, Scouts, piano, and church choir. Ritt always kept his children’s friends laughing. His children’s friends gave him the unofficial neighborhood record of being the slowest driver down the block, never doing more than 10 miles per hour. HAVE MERCY!

Being a Pop-Pop is one of Ritt’s proudest titles. With all grandsons and one granddaughter, he was proud of their accomplishments. Some of Ritt’s happiest moments were during Thanksgiving, when all of his grandkids would come and stay for days. During that time, Ritt had grandkids climbing into cabinets to play with plastic bowls, rolling around in the inflatable ball pits, and banging on his Baby Grand piano. Ritt loved it. HAVE MERCY!

Ritt had a special and unique relationship with his son-in-laws, Thomas Addison II and Maurice Clark Sr. The many conversations Ritt had with Thomas and Maurice about family, business, and academics created a special bond that will not be broken. HAVE MERCY!

Dr. Richard Ralph Spencer leaves to cherish his memory: his loving and dedicated wife, Anita Jeanne Matthews Spencer; his son, Brian Richard Spencer; his daughters, Dawn Janine Spencer Addison (Thomas II) and Shawla Denise Lenora Clark (Maurice Sr.); his sisters, Ella L. George and Jean Nichols; his sister-in-laws, Rachel Holliday and Delores Spencer; his 7 grandchildren: Thomas Edward Addison III, Terrence Solomon Spencer Addison, Maurice Saran Clark Jr., Matthew Omar Spencer, Tivoni Renee Spencer Addison, Richard Emanuel Spencer, Timothy David Spencer

Addison; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, friends, and colleagues.
HAVE MERCY!

From the words of Dr. Spencer's doctoral dissertation that holds true to his journey as a husband, father and grandfather, "Finally, I acknowledge the support, understanding, tolerance and encouragement of a wonderful family...without them I would not have been able to complete this task...HAVE MERCY!!!"

Cemetery Details

Rolling Green Memorial Park

1008 West Chester Pike
West Chester, PA 19382

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP 21. 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

Mt. Carmel Baptist Church
5732 Race Street
Philadelphia, PA 19139

Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Service

SEP 21. 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Mt. Carmel Baptist Church
5732 Race Street
Philadelphia, PA 19139

Service

SEP 21. 11:00 AM (ET)

Mt. Carmel Baptist Church
5732 Race Street
Philadelphia, PA 19139

Tribute Wall



“ *Richard R. Spencer*

October 07, 2023 at 11:34 AM



“ *Richard R. Spencer*

October 04, 2023 at 12:55 PM



“ *I praise God for Dr. Spencer. He was the best colleague at CEC Counselors and Consultants. He was also my clinical supervisor. I left the U.S.A. and when I returned for trainings I would contact him and ask how Nita and the family were doing. He was always excited about them. As time passed and we didn't speak I would call his number in the states and leave him messages. Hopefully, he heard them. I prayed for him daily and now pray for the family's strength in the Lord. He was the best. God bless you his family. In Christian love, Lauren Trott (Bermuda)*

Lauren trott - September 21, 2023 at 10:39 AM



“ *My fondest memories were when I got the chance to be with my paternal Morton family my dad's first cousin I always admired " with pipe in mouth dimples showing Have mercy" didn't get the chance to visit but know you will be forever in my heart by the way say hello to everyone for me and I'll see them when I get there*

Sheila Taylor Harris - September 20, 2023 at 11:11 AM