



## Mr. Joseph William "Joe" Byrd

June 19, 1925 - January 8, 2016

Mr. Joseph William "Joe" Byrd, age 90, of Utica, went home to heaven to be with his wife when he passed away on Friday, January 8, 2016 at the Betsy Ross Nursing and Rehabilitation Center with the love of his family in his heart. Born on June 19, 1925, Joseph was the son of the late Joseph W. and Elsie Byrd. He was born in the Bedford Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, NY, an area landmarked as a rich tapestry of Black American history. Raised and educated in Utica, he graduated from Utica Free Academy and attended MVCC. A proud veteran of the United States Army, he honorably served his country during World War II stationed in the Asiatic-Pacific Theater of Operations. In November of 1958, he married the former Roberta Williams with whom he shared 43 years; they loved one another, and Joe cared for the needs of his family. Roberta passed away on January 18, 2001.

Joe was employed as a contractor for a number of local companies including Laino Brothers Construction Company and B&B Sanitation. He later held a position at the Utica Transit Authority in the Bus Maintenance Department, and subsequently worked for the City of Utica in several capacities, most notably in the Department of Public Works and designed the trash collection routes used in Utica. During his retirement years, Joe was dedicated in his job as a driver for Head Start.

He was a loyal, hard-working, industrious employee, good co-worker and wise supervisor. who made things happen. As a dad, Joe asked his children to appreciate education and understand the importance of recognizing it as a

game-changer for achieving their future goals. He loved his community and strived for the well-being of all Uticans. Joe often wrote editorials that were published in the Observer-Dispatch and fought for and encouraged everyone to exercise their right to vote for the progress and prosperity of the community. He was a board member of Community Action Inc. and was a local leader of A. Philip Randolph Institute and CORE. He also loved various music and enjoyed friendly games of pinochle card parties with family and friends. He was the co-owner of the MB & B Social Club. He was a member of the American Legion Post #229 and was a Mason in the Free and Accepted Modern Masons Organization where he held a leadership position of Worshipful Master. He was a member of St. Matthew Temple Church of God in Christ.

The hallmark and highlight of Joe's life was his vision and fruition of the Utica "Screaming Eagles", a premier drill team that rose to a dream team and the only group to participate in the Macy's Day Parade for 2 consecutive years! Joe's timing was perfect: he observed and critiqued marching bands, mixed in his own magic, and the "aristocrats of precision drill" made their moves to the top. Joe effectively stylized the routines — they were BAAAD!!! In a recent article in the "Greater Utica" magazine entitled "The Aristocrats of Precision Drill", the story takes us back in time sharing accolades of former members of the "Screaming Eagles". They expressed their glory and pride in being part of a sixty-plus member drill team that performed "flawlessly" and the respect they had for their director and mentor, Joe Byrd. They also point out that there was no negativity in the drill team, only words like perfect, flawless, earned, motivated, self-respect, pride, honor, dedication, self-confidence, prestige, teamwork, structure, and discipline. Joe was a 'little giant Teddy bear', his stature was small but his heart was so big; he really cared about them. Joe was someone they could go to with their issues, he listened to their problems and helped them. As the author states, "There are those who have given to our community things that are priceless, things that could not be bought or bequeathed. These people should be equally recognized for having nothing

else to give their community except for their heart and everything that goes along with it". Joe knew that... and he proved it.

Joseph is survived by his daughter and son-in-law, Renee B. and Terah Isiahiliza of TX; his sons, Joseph William Byrd III and Michele Chapple, Justin N. Byrd, and Harold Carr, all of Utica, and helped raise Justin Clark of Utica; and adored his final victory, in granddaughter Roberta "Robbie" Byrd. He will also be remembered by his nieces, nephews, great-nieces, great-nephews, cousins (especially Anna Byrd), and his in-laws, Jerry P. Williams, Richard L. "Jughead" Williams, and Melvin Williams. Joe was also blessed with many friends throughout his life, especially grateful for Mary Anne (LoGalbo) Taverne who stepped in as a daughter. He was predeceased by a sister "Skippy" and niece Jennifer Mitchell; Regina Grimes Hines who was like a daughter; and his in-laws, Charles Williams, and Daisy Williams.

The family extends sincere thanks to the staff of the Betsy Ross Nursing Home who cared for Joseph with love and exceptional care over 10 years. A note of gratitude is given to Kristine Cedano, and Malique Green who were Joe's caretakers for numerous years.

A Memorial Gathering and visitation will be held on Friday from 10:00-12:00 noon at the Eannace Funeral Home, Inc., 932 South St., corner of Hammond Ave. Joseph's funeral service and Celebration of Life will commence on Friday at 12:00 noon at the funeral home immediately upon conclusion of visitation with Rev. James Griffin officiating the ceremony with military honors conferred.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JAN 15. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Eannace Funeral Home, Inc.  
932 South Street  
corner of Hammond Ave.  
Utica, NY 13501  
(315) 724-6714  
eannacefh@roadrunner.com

## Funeral Service

JAN 15. 12:00 PM (ET)

Eannace Funeral Home, Inc.  
932 South Street  
corner of Hammond Ave.  
Utica, NY 13501  
(315) 724-6714  
eannacefh@roadrunner.com

# Tribute Wall

PM

“ Grew up enjoying "The Screaming Eagles" Drill Team. His vision to create such an outstanding group of young people doing something positive is a testament to his character. Rest in Peace Joe....

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**Paul Mangano** - January 21, 2016 at 08:14 AM

SN

“ May Mr. Byrd rest in peace. I shall never, ever forget the "screaming eagles" in the parades!! They were great to watch. RIP...I know you are "marching in heaven"!

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**suzanne nagrocki** - January 18, 2016 at 09:29 AM

BT

“ Renee all I can say is WOW! I just read apart of your Dad's Legacy I'm certain there is more that just can't be put into words! He touch so many lives, he reminds of my Sweet Daddy! I knew you understood the importance of having a living dad still around! Well I'm sure my dad and your dad will meet in heaven and have conversations about their family! Love ya Sis! Prayers are being lifted Up!

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**Barbara Thomas** - January 17, 2016 at 09:24 AM



“ Renee, may the memories of the great things your Dad did abed his legacy remain a treasure in your heart and life. What am amazing encounter of what your Dad stood for abs made happen. I was just thinking yesterday what I wish people remember me for one am gone. The legacy we leave behind when we leave this earth is what matters. Your dad sure made a mark and left some big shoes to be filled. Our condolences to you and Uncle Terah and the extended family members. May God continue to uplift you as you heal from mourning your Dad. May the sweet memories of what he stood for and what he meant to you over power your tears. Love you! From the Ojagos.

Ednah Ojago - January 16, 2016 at 11:51 PM



“ We will keep your Dad and all of you in our prayers.



Tim & Colleen Moylan Family - January 16, 2016 at 08:57 AM



“ Renee, I remember your dad teaching us routines in color guard when we went to NYC with the band to march in the St Patrick's Day parade. I remember him saying after watching us march that first time " that's not marching, I'll show you how to march" and he did. Just the short time he worked with us, he was firm but made the drills fun. God be with you and your family at this time. Prayers & love Donna Excell McGovern

Donna Excell McGovern - January 16, 2016 at 08:49 AM

GB

“ Truly a great man has gone to be with the Lord....Thanks Joe for always allowing me to look up to you from my day one of life.. I have so many memories of growing up under your direction. You showed what a real man is and is willing to do for the sake of family and community....God bless your soul it will live in the lives of many forever.

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**Gail Banks** - January 15, 2016 at 08:50 PM

PP

“ Renee, I didn't know your dad, only knew of him. But judging by the person you are, I know that your dad must have been a wonderful man. Whenever you hear the thunder, you know his Eagles will be soarin' and roarin' as they perform for HIM. Love, Patty Kaelin Piperata.....

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**Patricia Piperata** - January 15, 2016 at 09:27 AM

TM

“ RIH Uncle Joe.....  
You were the #1 Drill Master..... many don't know it, however, you revived the Screaming Eagles - aka "Screaming Eagles II" back in 1979-1981 timeframe.... and I, along with so many, were apart of the 2nd generation of "Eagles" - Robin, Gretchen, Valerie, LaQuanda, Alicia, Veronica, Classie, Tyra, Melanie, Lisa..... just to name a few..... and for that, WE SAY THANK YOU.....



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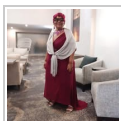
**Tyra McKinsey** - January 15, 2016 at 01:26 AM

RF

“ Roseann Pearson-Simmons & Family lit a candle in memory of Mr. Joseph William "Joe" Byrd



Roseann Pearson-Simmons & Family - January 14, 2016 at 08:36 PM



Gone but not forgotten. Rest in peace Mr. Byrd. Eleanor (Lois) Steele - McDonald

Eleanor McDonald - January 15, 2016 at 05:47 PM

PW

“ Joe was such a positive force to the young people back in his day and also a very good friend to my dad. He fought a good fight and has gone home to receive his reward. Many of your friends will be there to welcome you with open arms up there in Heaven. Rest now Joe your fight is over. God has called your name, get your crown you surely deserve it. God bless your family, your dad is one to be proud of. Stay strong in The Lord. R.I.P.  
The Maddox Family

Pamela Maddox Williams - January 14, 2016 at 02:55 PM

HM

Rip joe

House family/ charlene miller - January 14, 2016 at 06:07 PM

RB

“ RIP pop you where a great man , thank you for your example of love, your son derrick brooks.

raymond brooks - January 14, 2016 at 12:56 PM

TM

*Thank you Derrick for your kind words towards my uncle.... 🥰*

**Tyra McKinsey** - January 15, 2016 at 01:18 AM

KC

*“ Kristine Cedano lit a candle in memory of Mr. Joseph William "Joe" Byrd*



**Kristine Cedano** - January 14, 2016 at 11:10 AM



*“ Rip Joe. Prayers to the family. He will be missed*

**Dorothy Holloway** - January 14, 2016 at 10:42 AM



*“ Classie Boyd lit a candle in memory of Mr. Joseph William "Joe" Byrd*



**Classie Boyd** - January 14, 2016 at 09:33 AM



*“ Rest in peace Joe Byrd you will be missed.*

**Benita Rucker** - January 14, 2016 at 08:45 AM

SB

“ Susan Bynum lit a candle in memory of Mr. Joseph William "Joe" Byrd



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**Susan Bynum** - January 14, 2016 at 06:49 AM



“ Sending my deepest sympathy...Love to the Family..

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**Grace Decastro** - January 14, 2016 at 05:51 AM

DM

“ Donna Merhib lit a candle in memory of Mr. Joseph William "Joe" Byrd



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**Donna Merhib** - January 13, 2016 at 06:02 PM

DM

“ I also worked for the late Mayor Hanna and that's where I met Joe. He made us all laugh so hard our sides and checks hurt. It's been many years but still smile when I think of him. RIP Joe

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**Donna Merhib** - January 13, 2016 at 06:01 PM

JJ

“ Joe and I worked for the late-great Utica Mayor Edward A. Hanna. Joe was a loyal and dedicated public servant. All our prayers.

*Jim:*

*Sorry for your loss. I will always remember our discussions regarding life's challenges and the courage needed to face them. All our prayers.*

*Sam*

*Samuel L. Russo, Jr.*

*Local, State, Federal and International Government Specialist  
Administrator Emeritus*

*Mohawk Valley Community College (MVCC)*

*A division of the State University of New York (SUNY)*

*M. A. Government and Politics, St. John's University (New York City, NY)*

*Certificate in Public Administration, St. John's University (New York City, NY)*

*B.A. Urban Studies and Political Science, Utica College of Syracuse University (Utica, NY)*

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**Janice and Samuel L. Russo, Jr.** - January 13, 2016 at 10:30 AM