

Ruby Rosella Taylor McFarland (1920-2023)

By Jerry Long
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Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 21 November 2023, p.2B:

Ruby T. McFarland



On Saturday November 18, 2023, at the beautiful age of 103, the Lord welcomed home His good and faithful servant, Ruby T. McFarland of Owensboro, born in Sorgho, KY on July 29, 1920, to the late Junius Van and Lillian Marie Taylor. She graduated from Western High School in 1939 and worked for 25 years as a nurse assistant at Owensboro Daviess County Hospital.

She graduated from the KY School of Mortuary Science in 1974 and began a 45-year career as a licensed funeral director and embalmer at McFarland Funeral Home where she partnered in ownership with her husband, the late Rev. R. L. McFarland, Sr. This gave her the distinction of becoming the first African American female licensed mortician in Daviess County KY. She was recently recognized by the Kentucky Association of Morticians for her significant longevity of dedicated service to the association.

She served as first lady at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Owensboro for 46 years while her husband was pastor. At Mount Calvary, she was a faithful member of the Mother's Board, Missionary Society, Senior Choir, Sunday School, and was a youth leader. Her memberships and awards include Ladies KY Colonel, Amaranth Chapter No. 46 Order of the Eastern Star, Kentucky Association of Morticians, Funeral Directors Association of Kentucky, National Funeral Directors Association, and 100 Black Businesswomen's Award.

Her most important roles were mom, grandmother Ruby, Sis. McFarland and trusted friend. She had a passion for the earth as evidenced by her beautiful gardens and flowers.

In addition to her husband, she is preceded in death by her son, Richard L. McFarland, Jr.; grandson, Daniel Edward McFarland; great-grandson, Austin James McFarland; and longtime family friend, David Carter.

Mrs. McFarland is survived by her children, Freddie Rueben Sr., Dwight Taylor, Nestra Marie, Alison (Betty), Patricia (Mark), Susan (Diane) and Roger Scott Sr.; daughter-in-law, Patricia V. McFarland; 17 grandchildren; and numerous great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren; two "adopted" daughters, Mrs. Pamela Smith-Wright and Ms. Tanya Carter; and a special niece, Ms. Sylvia Long.

A celebration of life will be held at 11:00 a.m. Friday, Nov. 24, 2023, at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church with pastor Rev. Dr. Jeremiah L. Parks as officiant and eulogist. Entombment will be in the Owensboro Memorial Gardens Mausoleum. A viewing will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Thursday at McFarland Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Rev. R. L. McFarland Memorial Fund managed by Mount Calvary Baptist Church. Envelopes will be made available at the funeral home and at the church.

Care by McFarland Funeral Home, 1001 West Fifth St, Owensboro, KY 42301.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Saturday, 2 December 2023, pp.1D & 2D:

Ruby McFarland is gone, but her legacy lives on
Family business still thriving after 55 years

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

This is a story about a family business and the woman who was its heart and soul for five decades.

The story began in 1936, when John D. Haynes opened Haynes Funeral Home at 109 W. Seventh St.

In those days of segregation, his advertising said it was, "A colored institution."

In the fall of 1968, when Haynes was ready to retire, the Rev. Richard L. McFarland Sr. and his wife, Ruby Taylor McFarland, bought the funeral home and it became McFarland Funeral Home.

He was 51 and she was 48.

It wasn't like they weren't busy.

He worked at SouthCentral Bell and was pastor at Mount Calvary Baptist Church.

For 25 years, she worked nights on the maternity floor at what's now Owensboro Health Regional Hospital and part-time at the funeral home.

They didn't have a car, so she rode her bike to work.

Her husband didn't want her to ride at night by herself, so he would ride with her to the hospital and then turn around and ride home.

They had eight children.

Why take on another business?

People persons

"My parents were both people persons, always doing for others," Dwight McFarland said. "And the funeral business is about others."

"When it looked like Mr. Haynes would be selling his business, Dr. (Reginald) Neblett told me I should get my director's license," Ruby McFarland told the Messenger-Inquirer's Suzi Bartholomy in 2007

So, she enrolled in the Kentucky School of Mortuary Science in Louisville, where she graduated in 1974 as a director and embalmer.

She was 54.

In 2007, McFarland was recognized by the 100 Black Women of Funeral Service for her work in the industry.

She was the first African American female licensed mortician in Daviess County and was recognized by the Kentucky Association of Morticians for her longevity and dedicated service to the association.

McFarland died on Nov. 18, at 103.

"Me and my mom worked together until 1994," Dwight McFarland said.

He retired in 2020.

Alison McFarland, who runs the family business now, said, "I worked here from the beginning, but I became a mortician in 2006. She was fantastic to work with. She was above and beyond anyone I ever worked with. That's the way she was. You worked with her, not for her. She was truly inspiring and up-lifting."

Although she stopped working as a mortician in her 70s, Ruby McFarland "was still coming to funerals into her 90s," Alison McFarland said. "And she was still involved until she was 103. Dwight would bring her by. She wouldn't always get out of the car, but she stayed involved."

Her daughter, Patricia McFarland Oberg, said this week, "She was good at it. She was a great mom. And she really did impact a lot of people."

When her husband was elected to the first of six terms on the Owensboro City Commission in 1986, Ruby McFarland took on even more of the responsibility at the funeral home.

"She played a significant role with his campaigns," Alison McFarland said.

Rev. McFarland died in 2002 at 85.

Belinda Haliburton, a family friend, said, "I always had a deep respect and admiration for her ability to juggle raising a family with the responsibilities of being a pastor's wife and a business owner while showing pride in, and staying involved with, her community. I was totally impressed in how she stepped out on faith, furthered her education and changed her career path."

Haliburton said, "She was a pacesetter who quietly made a remarkable difference in the lives she touched. Whenever I was in her presence for any length of time, she always dished out words of wisdom or encouragement. Her life can be an example to be emulated by others."

Alison McFarland said, "She has several grandchildren and great-grandchildren who are interested in carrying on the business."

He was away from Owensboro for several years before retiring as a vice president of Lucent Technologies, the last six years in Brazil.

But he said, "I always wanted to come back and work with the family at the funeral home."

In 2006, the family built a new state-of-the-art funeral home at 1001 W. Fifth St.

Alison McFarland designed it.

The building "incorporates audio-visual services with a motorized drop-down large screen for showing memorial videos, closed-circuit television for funeral services or other displays as needed, flat screen television monitors as well as the traditional a/v services, state-of-the-art

preparation room, and lounge with kitchen facilities for guests," according to the funeral home's website.

McFarland Funeral Home is an African-American-owned business.

But it serves the entire community.

In 2007, Alison McFarland said, "We've had white people, Indian and other nationalities."

His mother said, "We don't care what color you are. I've had people whisper in my ear if we do white people," because they liked the way the service was conducted.

Ruby McFarland is gone now.

But her legacy continues.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 16 November 2007, pp.1C & 3C:

Funeral director recognized by national organization

By Suzi Bartholomy, Messenger-Inquirer



Ruby McFarland stands between two of her sons, Dwight McFarland, left, and Alison McFarland, in the funeral parlor Wednesday afternoon at McFarland Funeral Home, 1001 W. Fifth St. Ruby McFarland, owner, was recently recognized as one of the 100 Black Women of Funeral Service in the United States. Her sons are funeral directors.

When Ruby McFarland and her late husband, the Rev. R.L. McFarland, opened their funeral home in Owensboro 39 years ago, there were very few female funeral directors in the country.

In August, McFarland was recognized by the 100 Black Women of Funeral Service for her work in the industry. The organization was established in 1993 to provide a network for black women and minorities in funeral service.

Before becoming a funeral director, McFarland was a nurse on the maternity floor at Owensboro-Daviess County Hospital for 25 years. McFarland worked nights and her husband worked days. They didn't have a car, so McFarland rode her bike to work. "But he (her husband) didn't want me to ride at night by myself, so he would ride with me to the hospital and then turn around and ride home," McFarland said.

Ruby McFarland also worked part time for Haynes Funeral Home. "When it looked like Mr. Haynes would be selling his business, Dr. (Reginald) Neblett told me I should get my director's license," McFarland said.

When Haynes retired in 1968, the McFarlands bought his funeral home and hired a mortician to run it, and Ruby McFarland enrolled in the Kentucky School of Mortuary Science in Louisville. She graduated in 1974 as a director and embalmer.

While Ruby McFarland was in school, her husband took care of their eight children, worked at South Central Bell and was pastor at Mount Calvary Baptist Church.

"We always had other jobs," McFarland said. R.L. McFarland was elected to the first of six terms on the Owensboro City Commission in 1986, and Ruby McFarland had much of the responsibility of the funeral home.

McFarland Funeral Home has always been a family business. Sons Dwight and Alison helped their parents from the beginning.

Dwight McFarland has been working with his mother for most of his life. Like his parents, he also has more than one job. He's worked for Owensboro Medical Health System for 29 years as a medical technician and is a licensed funeral director and embalmer.

Alison returned to Owensboro several years ago after retiring as a vice president of Lucent Technologies. His last six years with Lucent were spent in Brazil.

"I always wanted to come back and work with the family at the funeral home," Alison McFarland said. He also is a funeral director.

Not everyone is suited for working with the deceased and their families. In addition to being trained in the field of mortuary science, one also needs empathy, compassion and the ability to help people handle tragedy. "You have to like people" and be willing to accommodate them, Ruby McFarland said.

"I served my apprenticeship under my mother. I give her credit for everything," Dwight McFarland said. "She is a very good teacher.

"I was young when I started working with her," Dwight McFarland said. "We had a lot of good conversations in the prep room, working funerals and driving to pick up the deceased."

"People used to think she was my sister, and now that I'm getting gray, they think I'm her husband," Dwight McFarland said with a laugh. "She's ageless."

Ruby McFarland is proud of her sons and their contributions to the family business. "They're pretty sharp," she said.

"That's because you taught us," Dwight McFarland said.

McFarland Funeral Home has had three locations. Last year, the family built a state-of-the-art mortuary at 1001 W. Fifth St. Alison McFarland, with input from his family, designed the building.

A common perception in the white population is that black-owned funeral homes only cater to blacks.

"We've had white people, Indian and other nationalities," Alison McFarland said.

"We don't care what color you are," said Ruby McFarland. "I've had people whisper in my ear if we do white people," because they liked the way the service was conducted.

"We just want to help people get through a difficult time," Dwight McFarland said. "We try our best to make it easier."




Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 4 June 1978, p.10A:

—10 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE—



You're Invited... *Open House*
TO OUR
Today from 1 P.M. to 4 P.M.
AT OUR NEW LOCATION
McFarland Funeral Home, Inc.
902 W. 8TH ST. PHONE 684-7704
Rev. and Mrs. R.L. McFarland, Owners



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Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 14 July 1974, p.6D:



EXAMING THE EXTERIOR of the Community Recreation Center at Filth and Elm streets are, from left. Ms. Ruby McFarland, Ms. Leitha Buck and Dr. R. C. Neblett. They are members of a committee in charge of raising \$100,000 to renovate the building.

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Polk's Owensboro City Directory, R. L. Polk & Co., Detroit, MI, 1969, p.410:

McFARLAND FUNERAL HOME (R L McFarland Sr)
Dignified, Thoughtful, Personal Service, A Truly
Remembered Service, 1019 W 7th St, Tel 684-7704

Mc Farland Geneva nurse 821 Triplett St h821 Triplett St
Mc Farland Geo L (Floy) jan Texas Gas h2511 W 9th St
Mc Farland Hubert D (Bernardine) (Mc Farland Studio) h1805 Parrish
Av
Mc Farland James A fcty wkr Green River Steel r906 Walnut Park
Dr
Mc Farland James D mtce P O h1711 Sweeney St
Mc Farland Jean communications opr City Police Dept r128 E 22d St
Mc Farland Mary E (Wid Roy L) h906 Walnut Park Dr
Mc Farland Mary H tchr Oboro Cath High Sch r537 Ewing Ct Apt 4
Mc Farland Myrtle (Wid J H) h2b P G Walker Homes
Mc Farland Nellie L (Wid Wm) h924 Crabtree Av
Mc Farland Paula fcty wkr Am Tob Co h724 W 8th St
Mc Farland Rachel B (Wid James W) recpt Brescia College h537
Ewing Ct Apt 4
Mc Farland Richd L Rev (Ruby) pastor Mt Calvary Baptist Ch h902
W 8th St

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Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 14 October 1968, p.8A:

**McFARLAND
FUNERAL HOME**
Formerly Haynes Funeral Home
Now owned and operated by R. L. McFarland
and Milton A. Mays

1019 West 7th Street **Phone 684-7704**

Prompt, efficient and courteous service rendered to our clientele through our modern Funeral Home with reasonable prices.

All services under the personal supervision of Milton A Mays, Licensed Funeral Director and Embalmer.

———Notary service available———

"The Same Friendly Service For All"



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 24 November 1967, p.1:



John D. Haynes

Funeral Director John D. Haynes Dies At Home

John Dean Haynes, owner and operator of Haynes Funeral home here for 32 years, died at 11:15 am. Thursday after an illness of five weeks.

Haynes, 55, resided at 1015 W. 7th St. He was born Jan, 12, 1912, and had lived in Owensboro all his life. He was a member and trustee of Calvary Baptist Church.

The funeral director was a 32nd degree Mason, a past senior warden of Mt. Pisgah Lodge No. 20, Free and Accepted Masons, of Owensboro. Haynes had served as Scribe of Edward Claybrook Chapter 17, Royal Arch Masons, and was Tyler of Francis Wilson Commandery 21, Knights Templar. A member of St. John's Consistory 54, Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Evansville, Ind., Haynes also was affiliated with Cawthar Temple No. 118 and was Noble of Mystic Shrine of Evansville.

He served many years as secretary of the United Brother of Friendship Lodge, was on the board of directors of Greenwood Cemetery, and was a member of the Savoy Club Haynes was graduated, from Western High School and the American Academy of Embalming and Mortuary Research in New York City.

Surviving are his widow, Mrs. Joanna Henry Haynes; one sister Mrs. Marvbelle Reid of New York City and an aunt, Georgia Beard and an uncle, John Harris, both of Owensboro.

Services will be held at 2 p.m. Tuesday at Calvary Temple Baptist Church, conducted by the Rev. R. L. McFarland pastor. Visiting ministers will assist. Burial will be in Greenwood Cemetery.

The body will be taken to the church at 11 a.m. Tuesday until time of services.

Friends may call at Haynes Funeral Home after 9 a.m. Saturday.



Owensboro Messenger, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 30 August 1936, p.8A:

ANNOUNCING FORMAL OPENING
of the New
HAYNES FUNERAL HOME
(A Colored Institution)
SUNDAY, AUGUST 30th
LOCATED AT 1019 W. SEVENTH ST.
We invite all our friends to pay us a visit and see this modern
establishment.
JOHN D. HAYNES, Licensed Mortician. Phone 1113-J



McFarland Funeral Home, 1001 West Fifth Street, Owensboro, KY. The funeral home moved to this location in 2006. The third location of the funeral home. From 1968-1978 was located at 1019 West Seventh Street and during 1978-2006 was at 902 West Eighth Street.



**LET'S HONK & CHEER
IN CELEBRATION OF**

Ruby McFarland

TURNING

100 YEARS

IT'S A BIRTHDAY PARADE!



WEDNESDAY, JULY 29TH

5PM

VEHICLES LINE UP AT CHURCH

5:15PM

PARADE BEGINS



Mount Calvary Baptist Church 507 Plum Street | Owensboro, KY | 270-684-9606

Rev. Andre L. Bradley, Pastor

