



Harold Townes

August 14, 2017

Harold M. Townes was born on February 24, 1914 in Almagro Virginia, and passed away peacefully at the home of his daughter on August 14, 2017. He was the oldest son of John Townes and Roberta Ware Townes. Harold was 103.

At a young age, Harold's family moved to Spring Valley New York and then to Harlem. Harold graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School in New York City. With the outbreak of World War II, Harold served in the Army and was stationed in North Africa and met Ossie Davis who became a lifelong friend and neighbor. He attained the rank of Staff Sergeant and received the Victory Medal, the American Campaign Medal, and the European African Middle Eastern Campaign Medal. Following his discharge, Harold joined the New York City police force, rose to the rank of detective and subsequently retired after 20 years of service. Having served most of his career in Harlem, he prided himself on never having had to draw his weapon.

In 1947, Harold married Georgette Walker and they remained together for 66 years until her passing in 2014. They lived in Mount Vernon and subsequently in New Rochelle, New York. They had one child, Marsha Valerie Townes. For most of his adult life, Harold attended Centennial Methodist Church in Mount Vernon.

A major highlight of his career occurred in 1958 when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. visited Harlem during a book signing tour. Dr. King was stabbed by a deranged woman who fled and hid under a car. Harold Townes, as a detective

successfully coaxed the woman out from under the car and arrested her without further violence. Harold visited Dr. King in the hospital several times. Dr. King was very impressed with Harold and how he handled the incident, and subsequently requested that Harold coordinate a team of bodyguards for all of his subsequent trips to New York.

After retiring from the police force, Harold joined the New York City Legal Aid Society to set up their Investigation Division. Starting with one employee, he built the Division to 105 investigators, covering all five boroughs of the City. He hired a number of retired police officers, among them his very close friend Eddie Puppe, who ran the Queens Division. Harold retired after 21 years of service.

Not one to be idle, Harold through a friend, the former Heavyweight Champion Floyd Patterson, went to work for the New York State Boxing Commission as a ring official, checking the gloves for hidden objects between rounds. Harold worked for the Commission well into his 80s. Harold had an affinity for boxing, having been a Golden Gloves competitor during his youth.

In 2014 Harold moved to Teaneck, New Jersey to be near his daughter and her family. He attended St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Teaneck.

Harold is survived by his daughter Marsha (Townes) Mackey, his son-in-law Howard Mackey, his grandsons Kris, Nick, and Jordan, and his great-grandchildren Sean and Amaya.

Cemetery Details

Kensico Cemetery

273 Lakeview Ave
Valhalla, NY 10595

Previous Events

Graveside Service

AUG 18. 11:00 AM - 11:30 AM (ET)

Kensico Cemetery
273 Lakeview Ave
Valhalla, NY 10595

Tribute Wall



“ *Harold Townes*

October 08, 2023 at 09:59 PM



“ *Harold Townes*

October 08, 2023 at 06:27 PM



“ *Harold Townes*

August 30, 2022 at 02:48 PM