



Romeo Watkins

February 7, 1939 - April 30, 2020

Romeo Watkins entered eternal rest on April 30, 2020 at his residence in Columbia, South Carolina. Born in the Ridgewood community of Columbia, South Carolina on February 7, 1939 he was the son of the late Deacon Leroy and Beatrice Harris Watkins. In 1961, he married Annette Caughman of Columbia, South Carolina.

The third child of eight, Romeo grew up in a loving home, anchored by a close-knit community, and deeply rooted in the church. His maternal grandmother, Agnes Harris, who lived next door, played an important role in the rearing and molding of Romeo and his siblings. He often told stories of traveling every summer with her to her hometown of Bronson, Florida. His maternal aunt, Mrs. Franklin Scott Harris, also played an important role in Romeo's upbringing. A favorite nephew, he often stayed with "Aunt Franklin" at her home across the street from the SC Governor's Mansion. He was educated in Richland County schools, attending Ridgewood Elementary School, and Booker T. Washington High School.

Romeo received his early Christian training in the home and was a life-long member of Ridgewood Baptist Church, joining as a child under the pastorate of Rev. Z.E. Dennis. As a youth, he was a member of the church's first Junior Choir. He forged a friendship with Rev. Jeremiah Witherspoon, Rev. Dennis' successor, that spanned over sixty years, enduring even after Rev. and Mrs.

Witherspoon relocated to Pennsylvania. Romeo's service to Ridgewood Church continued during the forty-year pastorate of Rev. Dr. L.C. Chavous. A third generation member, he served for many years on the Church History Committee, and was regarded as a historian of the Ridgewood community. While he served in many capacities, Romeo's greatest joy at church was his long tenure on the Jubilee Choir, where he was Leader, the same role that had been held by his father. He was well known throughout the city for his expert knowledge of shape-note singing and common meter hymns.

Romeo learned the value of hard work at an early age. In the mid-1960s, he began work as a civilian at US Army base Ft. Jackson, retiring in 1993. He began barbering as a 10-year old, his first "customer" was his older brother Charles. He owned and operated a barber shop on North Main Street for over forty years. Ever the entrepreneur, he was a successful real estate agent in the 1970s. Known for his impeccable taste and style, Romeo was always fashionably dressed.

As a young caddy on Columbia's segregated golf courses, Romeo developed a love of the game, and he enjoyed playing in golf tournaments across Columbia and throughout the state. He also was former Commissioner of the Eau Claire Youth Baseball League.

In his retirement, Romeo loved watching Jeopardy, Heat of the Night, and all old television westerns, with Gunsmoke his absolute favorite. He especially enjoyed the Court-TV shows, particularly the no-nonsense Judge Judy.

Romeo leaves to cherish precious memories his devoted wife of fifty-eight years, Annette Caughman Watkins; four children: Quintus (Verdell) Young, Brigitte Watkins Long, Yelberton Romeo Watkins, and Vancito Ethridge Watkins; nine grandchildren: Quintus, Justin, Velicia, Gabrielle, Danielle, Autumn, Alexi, Tori, and Ashlyn; three great-grandchildren: Jamari, Raleigh,

and Solomon; and a host of nieces, nephews, other relatives, Meadow Lake neighbors, and close friends.

He will be laid to rest at the historic Zion Chapel Baptist #1 Church Cemetery, joining his parents, siblings, beloved grandmother, and in-laws.

A Festival of Jubilee Choirs will be held at a later date in Romeo's memory.

Cemetery Details

Zion Chapel Baptist Church

7409 Fairfield Road
Columbia, SC 29203
(803) 735-8629

Previous Events

Public Viewing

MAY 4. 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Palmer Memorial Chapel - Columbia
1200 Fontaine Place
Columbia, SC 29223
(803) 786-6300
palmermemorialchapel@gmail.com
<https://www.palmermemorialchapel.com>

Tribute Wall



“ *Romeo Watkins*

October 04, 2023 at 11:33 AM



“ *I was sitting here thinking about Mr. Romeo and wondering what he was up to these days and sadly found this obituary not knowing that his home going took place 2 years ago! He and I worked together at Carolina First Bank in the early 2000's when I was really young, man he use to give me a hard time about being on time but we became very close over time. He was like a mentor! He says he knew my mom when they worked at the reception station at Ft Jackson! Loved seeing him practicing his golf swing! He had a personalized license plate on the front of his truck that simply said "Golf" ...RIP Mr Romeo! - Russell Orris, Columbia SC*

Russell Orris - October 10, 2022 at 10:28 PM



“ *Cedrick Watkins & Family purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Romeo Watkins.*



Cedrick Watkins & Family - June 27, 2020 at 09:02 PM

PM

“ Priscilla Murrell lit a candle in memory of
Romeo Watkins



Priscilla Murrell - May 24, 2020 at 06:44 PM

RS

“ Romeo, issued my first uniform military at fort jackson

Roosevelt Samuel - May 15, 2020 at 11:53 PM

RS

“ Roosevelt Samuel lit a candle in memory of
Romeo Watkins



Roosevelt Samuel - May 15, 2020 at 11:48 PM

DJ

“ DON JENNINGS lit a candle in memory of
Romeo Watkins



DON JENNINGS - May 11, 2020 at 02:23 AM

AD

“ Ashley and James Beaty, Washington, D.C. purchased the Southern Magnolia Tree for the family of Romeo Watkins.



Ashley and James Beaty, Washington, D.C. - May 08, 2020 at 03:48 PM

EH

“ Yebbie,

Lisa and I convey our deepest condolences to you and the entire Watkins family. I did not know him, but I know his son Yebble. And judging by the man he raised, Mr. Watkins must have been a caring, brilliant, funny, and wonderful man.

With profound sadness, I remain...

Your lifelong friend,

Erik

Erik Huey - May 08, 2020 at 02:38 PM

CW

“ May God give you peace during this time. I met Bro. Watkins through the CBJCU and enjoyed singing with him.
ClaudiaWilliams

Claudia G Williams - May 08, 2020 at 11:07 AM

BV

“ *Belinda J Valentine lit a candle in memory of
Romeo Watkins*



Belinda j Valentine - May 08, 2020 at 08:21 AM



“ Yebbie -



I will always remember your father's smile, kindnesses, composure, dignity and friendship.

We shared like your boss a love of golf and that's were we bonded at the Canzater back in the 90s. He was good too!

I'll always remember that distinctive walk of his which was confident and proud. And I was proud and privileged to meet and know him.

Had we lived in the same neighborhood, I would have been over at your house as much to see him as you. He was that kind of magnetic and majestic personality. You just wanted to be around him.

Your dad was a loving husband, a giving father, a thoughtful grandfather and a Saint among men; we are ALL better human beings for having known him because of his spirituality, virtue and compassion.

Thankfully that has been passed on through you and your beautiful family.

His impact will live forever as will the impressions he made on us because he was the genuine article, a man who loved life and God and made this world a much better place for having shared it with us gracefully.

We ALL hope your mother is ok during this difficult time for you and her and your siblings and family.

Please know that we are here for you and them and will always remember Romeo when we are in your presence, Yelberton Romeo Watkins.

Always your friend (and brother),

Lyndon

Lyndon Boozer - May 06, 2020 at 11:22 PM

RA

“ *To the family of Brother Watkins, we send our condolences and prayers in memory of a great and loving man. I remember him from my earliest childhood in Ridgewood; always had a positive word for the youth, sharp, sharp dresser! A life time of leadership at Ridgewood Baptist Church. I will cherish the photo we took together at the first President Obama Gala in D.C. at the Smithsonian. Sleep on my brother, hope to see you in the sweet by and by.*
Reginald Abel and Family
Murfreesboro, TN.

Reginald K Abel - May 06, 2020 at 02:41 PM

PG

“ *Pastor Collie (David) Gandsy lit a candle in memory of Romeo Watkins*



Pastor Collie (David) Gandsy - May 06, 2020 at 11:57 AM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Romeo Watkins.*



May 06, 2020 at 11:08 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Romeo Watkins.*



May 06, 2020 at 10:52 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Romeo Watkins.*



May 06, 2020 at 10:50 AM



“ *LaVerne Fluker lit a candle in memory of Romeo Watkins*



LaVerne Fluker - May 06, 2020 at 12:33 AM



“ *Fond memories of a great guy and a dear friends. My prayers are with the family in these hours of sorrow.*

*Ervena Wilson Faulkner
Port Royal, South Carolina*

Ervena Faulkner - May 05, 2020 at 10:16 PM

PP

RIP, I'm going to miss all the charm and laughter you shared with sooooo many people! Including through out SC My uncle the late Charles TRAPP and whole Ridgewood community

Priscilla Pelzer - May 06, 2020 at 07:57 PM

KB

“ *May God continue to bless the Watkins family at this time and always, and may he continue to give you strength each and every day.*
Kenny & Joy Barnes.

Kenneth Barnes - May 05, 2020 at 05:41 PM

FH

“ *To The Watkins Family Your Family will always be forever in my 🙏 The Mack and Hopkins Family*



Felicia Mack Hopkins - May 05, 2020 at 05:06 PM

MH

“ *We are so sorry for your loss and send our sincere condolences to the family.*

Michelle Hurley - May 05, 2020 at 01:48 PM

SB

“ *Sheryl D. Belcher lit a candle in memory of Romeo Watkins*



Sheryl D. Belcher - May 05, 2020 at 01:38 PM



“ *Large Basket Garden was purchased for the family of Romeo Watkins.*



May 05, 2020 at 12:57 PM



“ *To The Watkins Family:*

*Words will not wipe
away your tears and hugs
may not ease the pain
but hold onto your memories
because forever they will remain.*

*Sincerest sympathy from:
The Dubard & Roary Family*

Brenda D Roary - May 05, 2020 at 11:09 AM



“ *Beardsley Eleanor purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Romeo Watkins.*



Beardsley Eleanor - May 05, 2020 at 10:58 AM

BE

“ Dear Yebbie, I will always have fond memories of seeing your father at school and other events when we were at WJ Keenan and at other times. I see where you got your good looks and impeccably dressed manner! And in high school I remember we loved his name. Romeo. Your father did indeed have a wonderful and very purposeful life. He did so much for the community and was such a part of it. I had no idea that his membership and devotion to his church went back so far. Now I understand why Shiloh Baptist church in Washington DC Was so important to you. And I remember attending Handel’s Messiah there With you. Every Christmas it was the performance not to miss. What a loving family your dad grew up in and then founded. He passed on The importance of family and community. I know he was so proud of you and all of your accomplishments. I know he will be sorely missed. I passed the news on to my own father last night and he was very moved. Although Ed Beardsley is declining, with Alzheimer’s, he remembers your father so well and asked me to please give you his condolences. You and your family are in our thoughts Yebbie. I look forward to speaking with you soon.
Much love,
your lifelong friend Ellie Beardsley

Beardsley Eleanor - May 05, 2020 at 08:40 AM

LW

“ Family,

Romeo was a great pillar of not only the church, but the entire Ridgewood community. He will be greatly missed, but will always be in my heart.

Linda White (803) 799-8310



Linda White - May 05, 2020 at 06:35 AM

“ To Brother Romeo Watkins' beloved family: May our God of all comfort, bless you with His comfort and peace. And may your fond memories of your precious loved bring comfort your hearts.

Brother Romeo Watkins leaves a legacy that's worthy of emulation. Very admirably, he was dedicated and cared for his family.

He was a business man, whose barber shop served as a "Third Place" for many of his patrons. A meeting place. A gathering spot. A place to fellowship and relax.

He was my husband's barber and friend. As well, barber to our three sons, giving our youngest, who will be 40 in a few days, his first hair cut.

Romeo served and was active in his church. He loved his church family and the Ridgewood community!

Of his service to his church, he loved and sang on the Jubilee choir. He had that "Jubilee choir's voice", that's becoming hard to find, anymore.

What's more, he loved to explain the history of Jubilee choir singing and "shaped note" music. Romeo demonstrated and told of the differences in the Jubilee choirs' music, beats, and etc., and told of the differences in various regions in South Carolina.

Once Romeo Watkins and the African pastor of First Northeast Baptist Church, Stephen Masolwa, participated in Historic Columbia's Jubilee Festival, telling the history and noting similarities in the North American Jubilee Choir music, with similar music that originated on the African continent, despite the Diaspora of the African people due to slavery.

The two sang bars of music and songs, from each one's native tongue, to demonstrate the similarities. And each gave enlightening, informative talks about that genre of Black American and African

worship music.

Another personal attribute of Romeo Watkins is that he did not fall in line with the status quo in social issues or church matters.

He didn't "follow the crowd". He observed and weighed the evidence and the facts, and arrived at his decisions based on the prevailing facts or evidence, and not the popular or the majority's opinion.

Something else that we see very little of anymore!

And finally, while there are many more admirable qualities in the wonderful legacy that Romeo Watkins leaves with us (he was also a sharp dresser) the last one I will note is that of his faith and acceptance of Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior.

In a visit days before Big Bro' Romeo's (as I called him) passing, although his thoughts and words were weaving in and out from the medication, he communicated plainly, and without any hesitation, that he had accepted Jesus Christ as His Lord and Savior.

And in a very peaceful and calm, and the unwavering, Romeo Watkins' assured tone, he followed up with talk about his going home and seeing the King!

As I left my dear brother's bedside, two "going home songs", "Zion's Hill" and "Finding It Home" have continued to resound within me since that morning.

Yes, we will see Romeo Watkins again, and the King, if we like he, by faith, accept Jesus Christ as our Savior.

"Some day I'll hear the angels singing...And all the bells of heaven ringing, While saints are singing, "Home, sweet home." -excerpt from Zion's Hill

Charlyce Goodwin - May 04, 2020 at 11:06 PM

YB

“ We are deeply sorry for your loss. We hope you feel the love that surrounds you, now and always. Praying for your healing, comfort, strength, and peace during this painful time. Celebrating an amazing life and wishing you comfort in your memories.

Condolences

Yolanda and Danny Boozer

Yolanda Boozer - May 04, 2020 at 08:53 PM

GW

“ We are sorry to here of romieo passing you and your family have our deepest condolences he was my greatest golf buddy I will sourley miss the debates of our conversations the laughter our visiting who will I play golf with now when I come to sc we love you miss you. Rest my friend rest. George Watkins & family



George watkins - May 04, 2020 at 06:28 PM

PC

“ Dear Yebbie:

I am sorry to hear about the passing of your father. I join you and your family in celebrating and remembering Mr. Watkins' remarkable journey.

As I worked with the Ridgewood Baptist Church's history committee, it was clear that your father was the community griot--gifted with a vivid and detailed memory. May those present and generations to come build upon his legacy.

*Grace & Peace to you and your family,
Dr. Bobby Donaldson
Professor
University of South Carolina*

Palmer Memorial Chapel - May 04, 2020 at 05:53 PM

PC

“ Yebbie

I learned of your father's illness and I wanted to let you know that I am thinking of you. I will keep your family in my prayers. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to help you during this difficult time.

All the best,

Lonnie

*Lonnie G. Bunch III
Secretary
Smithsonian Institution*

Palmer Memorial Chapel - May 04, 2020 at 05:28 PM

ED

Yebbie,


May God keep you and you family in his comforting hands. As your father moves from labor to reward, think of the goodness of the lord and his enduring grace.

Eugene and Tonya Kinlow

Eugene D.Kinlow - May 05, 2020 at 11:37 AM

DW

“ *My sincere condolences to our extended family during these most difficult days. We all have so many great memories of Romeo. You can't talk about Ridgewood or Lawton Street without talking about him. We were more than neighbors, we were family. He was a fine man and a friend to everyone who met him. May God continue to Bless and strengthen you all, and may be Rest Peacefully in Heaven!*




Djuana Wilson and family and Peggy Bethel

Djuana Wilson - May 04, 2020 at 02:32 PM

ES

“ *Evelyn Stewart lit a candle in memory of Romeo Watkins*



Evelyn Stewart - May 04, 2020 at 02:06 PM

SG

“ Some 30 years ago, I was in search of a good barber. Soon after, I met Romeo who not only became the barber for me and my three sons, but quickly became a very good friend. I will miss my good friend and our many and long conversations that always eclipsed the time that it would normally take for a haircut.

The occasional bars of a good Jubilee tune will surely be missed along with snippets of history and experiences in his beloved Ridgewood community. I'm glad that we finally made it to the Millpond Restaurant since we had talked about it for over a year.

Romeo had a great love for his family and his church. I am comforted by the fact that he did not waiver in his faith in God and in our last conversation a couple of weeks ago, that faith was evident as he looked forward to his meeting the Lord.

May God comfort the Watkins family.

Sherman Goodwin

Sherman Goodwin - May 04, 2020 at 01:12 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Romeo Watkins.



May 04, 2020 at 12:49 PM

CW

“ *Uncle Romeo, you will be missed so much.
Always in our hearts*



Christine Watkins - May 04, 2020 at 12:39 PM

EY

“ *May God keep you all in his loving care. Bless and stay strong.
Love Estelle Young and Norman Caldwell*

Estelle Young - May 04, 2020 at 12:08 PM

JR

“ *My wife and I send our deepest sympathy to the family of Mr.
Romeo Watkins. I only knew him for a short time , but he was
always very nice to me. He always gave me encouraging words.
May you hold on to your great memories. May God continue to be
with you in this very difficult time. John H. Rickenbacker.*

John H. Rickenbacker - May 04, 2020 at 12:02 PM



“ *Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the
family of Romeo Watkins.*



May 04, 2020 at 11:41 AM

VE

“ Vivian C Edmonds lit a candle in memory of Romeo Watkins



Vivian C Edmonds - May 04, 2020 at 10:40 AM



“ Large Basket Garden was purchased for the family of Romeo Watkins.



May 04, 2020 at 05:20 AM

QI

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Quintus Young, II - May 04, 2020 at 12:16 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Romeo Watkins.



May 03, 2020 at 07:47 PM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Romeo Watkins.*



May 03, 2020 at 03:20 PM



“ *Precious memories of my Uncle Romeo at his mother's birthday celebration. "1985" You will be missed! Love, Onie*



Onie Whitehead - May 03, 2020 at 02:44 PM

SG

“ *Mr. Watkins was indeed a GREAT man. His influence, love and friendship spanned many generations.*

How often does someone outside of your family watch you grow from a mere boy to a man? I had that honor of him being a part of that in my life.

He started cutting my hair when he was 39 and continued on until 2017. A great friendship was formed, and it was great the transition of him being a friend once I became a man. I will say he always continued to tell me don't jump even as an adult when I would move suddenly under the hair clippers.

He treated you in such a way that easily felt like you were one of his children.

This is a very sad time to know he is not here in body with us any longer. It feels like a parent has died.

It is comforting knowing that he is now with our Lord and he no longer has to worry about the ailments and frailties of this body.

May God comfort you Mrs. Watkins, Quinn, Brigitte, Yebbie and Van.

Sherman C. Goodwin - May 03, 2020 at 12:26 PM

LB

“ *Love...Lesha, Carletta, Onie, Kevin and Bartisha! purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Romeo Watkins.*



Love...Lesha, Carletta, Onie, Kevin and Bartisha! - May 03, 2020 at 12:23 PM

GL

“ I’m going to miss coming home and watching our show, Jeopardy, together, but I’m happy you’re at peace. I will forever be “Papa’s Big Girl.” I love you, Papa.



Gabrielle Long - May 03, 2020 at 11:18 AM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* was purchased for the family of Romeo Watkins.



May 03, 2020 at 08:55 AM

DL

“ I will surely miss my papa! I will cherish our memories always. As the jubilee song says, “my soul is resting now.” He is finally at rest with our great Lord!



Danielle Long - May 02, 2020 at 05:56 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* was purchased for the family of Romeo Watkins.



May 02, 2020 at 05:39 PM