

*A Celebration of Life*  
*Charles Hardin Quillings*



*Sunrise - August 30, 1920*  
*Sunset - March 22, 2011*

*Wednesday, March 30, 2011*  
*2:00 P.M.*

*Consolidated Baptist Church*  
*Lexington, Kentucky*  
*Rev. Richard Gaines, Pastor*

## *Reflections*

Charles Hardin Quillings entered his melody of life on August 30, 1920 in Muskogee, Oklahoma. He was the second child of the late Jodie and Blanche Quillings. Very early in life, he was baptized and began a great love of praise and worship with God and music.

He graduated from Manual Training High School in 1938 and was a member of the high school marching and jazz bands. After graduating from Manual, he entered Kentucky State College on a music scholarship and played in the Kentucky State Collegiate Jazz Band. He received his B.A. degree in English in 1942. He also participated in the chorus where he met the love of his life, Marie "Honey Bunch" Cruse. This union of 64 years produced two devoted and loving daughters, Thelma Anita and Juanita Blanche.

After college, he proudly served in the U.S. Army for four years as an assistant warrant officer and as director of the Jazz Orchestra. He thoroughly enjoyed sharing stories about his Army experiences with his family and friends. He began his career at Dunbar Senior High School, and during his 20 years of service he guided many musicians, composers, and singers who have earned regional and national acclaim, including jazz musician Les McCann. During the restructuring of the school system, he was named Assistant Principal of Paul Lawrence Dunbar and at its closure, became the Assistant Principal of Crawford Middle School. Before retiring he became an Administrator with Fayette County Schools. He touched thousands of students' lives and graciously directed them to avenues of opportunities, encouraging them to be the best that they could be.

Mr. "Q," as he was affectionately known, often sat in on Jam sessions in the old Joyland Park and Lyric Theatre with John Maddox, Louis Armstrong, Jay McShann, Lionel Hampton, Smoke Richardson's Band and Aaron Bell of Count Basie's Band.

He gave 68+ years of service to Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated. He made University of Kentucky history as one of the first five blacks admitted to the Masters of Education Program, earning that degree in 1952. He was the first African American to be named Kentucky's All-State Band Director. He was one of the first African-Americans to become a member of the Lexington Symphony Orchestra and was twice named a Kentucky Colonel, and received the UK Lymon T. Johnson Achievement Award in 1992. He received a 25 Year Phi Delta Kappa Membership Award, and was recognized at the NAACP State Conference. He was a member of the Kentucky Educators' Association. A love of music and "Honey Bunch" made them ideal members of The Lexington Singers where they performed around the country. He played trumpet with The Young at Heart Big Band and was a faithful member, director, and writer before moving to Atlanta, GA. He and his wife were also devoted Meals on Wheels volunteers, delivering lunches to seniors.

Moving to Atlanta, GA, to be with his daughters, he united with Jackson Memorial Baptist Church, Rev. Dr. Gregory A. Sutton, Senior Pastor. It was there that he would march around the church in time with music, smiling, giving God praise and proudly giving his offering. He would also attend New Horizon Baptist Church, Rev. Sean Smith, Pastor where he was the Pastor's cheerleader, and Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, where he made many new friends. Charles also attended the Emma Darnell Adult Center where he toured the city portraying Bojangles, Ray Charles and other roles.

Charles was preceded in heaven by the love of his life Marie "Honey Bunch" Cruse Quillings, his brothers Robert, Jodie, Samuel and Raymond Quillings; his sister Dorothy Salem, and son-in-law Lamond Godwin. He leaves to cherish his memories a sister Elzater Quillings Addison of Kansas City, Mo; daughters Thelma Q. Godwin, Dr. Juanita Laurie Morton (Harold); grandchildren Agnes Godwin Hall (Darin), Charlie Godwin (August), Dr. Nikia Laurie Lewis (Torrance), and Sean David Laurie; great grandchildren Grace and Sarah Hall; nieces Camille Lucas (Arthur), Dr. Mara Chambers (Croswell), Judy Spangler (Nicholas), Victoria Metlock, and Karen Ell; nephews Roger Quillings (Judy), Dr. Frederick Merchant, John Merchant (Debra), Sanford Dunson (Peggy), Duane Addison (Candice), and Emmett Edwards; great-nieces, grandnephews, and a host of other family and friends.

# Order of Service

Rev. Richard Gaines, Officiating

Congregational Hymn.....Holy, Holy, Holy

Invocation

Scripture.....Luke 16: 19-31

Selection....."We Shall Behold Him"  
Mr. Van Berry

Kappa My Dream.....Mr. Michael Beckham

Mayor's Proclamation.....Mr. Glenn Brown

## Expressions

Former Student.....Mrs. Lutisha Coleman-Morton

Family.....Dr. Gregory Woolfolk, Mr. Charlie Godwin  
and Mr. Phillip Williams

Video Tribute.....Mr. Eric Shelby Cruse

Reflections of Life (Obituary).....Soft Music

Musical Tribute.....Mr. Michael Mackenzie Cruse

Eulogy.....Rev Dr. Gerald Smith

Congregational Hymn....."God Will Take Care of You"

Recessional.....Since I Laid My Burdens Down

### *Acknowledgement*

*Perhaps you sent a lovely card, or sat quietly in a chair.  
Perhaps you sent some delicious morsels, what a way to show  
you care.*

*Perhaps you prayed for us in the most sincere way,  
Perhaps you were not there at all, just thought of us in some  
way.*

*Whatever your deed in our time of need,  
We thank you so very much  
The Family*

### *With Special Gratitude to our Caregivers*

*Betty Wooten  
Eloise McLaughlin  
Crystal Whatley  
Angela Treasure*

### *Active Pallbearers*

*Croswell Chambers  
Murray Cruse  
Gregory Woolfolk  
Arthur Lucas  
Frederick Merchant  
John Merchant  
Keith Powell*

### *Honorary Pallbearers*

*The Members of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated*

### *Prelude*

*Young at Heart Big Band*

### *Musician*

*Charles F. Little, Jr.*

### *Interment*

*Cove Haven Cemetery*

*Arrangements Entrusted To  
Smith & Smith Funeral Home*

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James Lester Thomas, former Lexington police officer and real estate agent

### Charles Quillings, band director at first Dunbar High, dies at 90

Published: March 25, 2011



He kept playing long past retirement

By Merlene Davis — [mdavis1@herald-leader.com](mailto:mdavis1@herald-leader.com)

Charles Quillings, the longtime band and choral director at Lexington's first Dunbar High School and the influence for many students who entered the field of music, died Tuesday in Atlanta. He was 90.

Mr. Quillings trained local musicians including renowned bandleader Les McCann, the late Courtney and Michael Allen, the late jazz drummer Norman Higgins and the late saxophonist George Gentry.

In earlier years, his love of music, especially the trumpet, drew him to jam sessions with Louis Armstrong and Lionel Hampton when those legendary musicians played in Lexington.

"He was a father figure to many of us in high school," said Lutisha Coleman-Morton, who accompanied the Dunbar Glee Club and choral group and played in the school band. "We all looked up to him. He was a very stern and firm band director, and we respected him because of that."

Mr. Quillings, who was born in Muskogee, Okla., became smitten with the mellophone, a marching-band instrument that he played in fifth grade, and later a trumpet that he bought in a pawn shop for \$11.

He attended what's now Kentucky State University and played in the Kentucky State Collegiate Jazz Band from 1938 to 1942. He met his wife, Marie, there during his senior year. The couple were married for 65 years, until her death last August.

When he was hired in 1947 as band director at Dunbar and four elementary schools, there were only nine Dunbar students who met his standards for the band. He filled in with elementary students.

When Dunbar closed in 1967, the band had 128 members and was one of the best in the state. Mr. Quillings said in a 2005 Herald-Leader article that Dunbar's band was always put last in parades so that spectators would be sure to stay until the end.

Mr. Quillings earned his master's degree in music education from the University of Kentucky, where in 1952 he was one of only five black students in the program.

He was also the first black president of the Kentucky Band Directors, in 1968-69.

He played trumpet in a local band, Young at Heart, for many years before moving with his wife to Atlanta, the home of his two daughters, Thelma Godwin and Juanita Morton.

"When he came here, he was still into music," Morton said. Her father was dancing and singing as Bojangles in one play, Ray Charles in another, and as the lion in *The Wiz*.

"He was a giant of a man with music in his soul," Morton said. "He could outplay anybody on any instrument."

For many people, though, "Mr. Q" is remembered as a dedicated teacher who loved music. He retired from Fayette County Public Schools in 1982.

When Mr. Quillings came around asking students which instrument they wanted to play, Bennett Higgins of Louisville, brother of Norman, said he asked for the trombone.

When Mr. Quillings said no, telling him to take the saxophone instead, Bennett Higgins was upset and asked why. "He said because your arms are not long enough," Higgins recalled, laughing.

In later years, "I really thanked him for telling me about the saxophone," he said. "I play it professionally now."

Higgins is retired after 30 years of being a band director in Louisville public schools. "I have nothing but fond memories of him," he said of Mr. Quillings.

Services will be at 2 p.m. Wednesday at Consolidated Baptist Church in Lexington. Visitation will be noon to 2 p.m. at the church. Smith & Smith Funeral Home is in charge of the arrangements.

Reach Merlene Davis at (859) 231-3218 or 1-800-950-6397, Ext. 3218.

[Back to Top](#)  
[< Previous Story](#)



[Next Story >](#)

**Funeral for Harry N. Sykes, former Lexington mayor pro tem, will be Monday**