

In Loving Memory of Marvin C. Junior, of The Dells



Marvin aka LD

Big Man with the Big Voice and Big Heart
Says Farewell but not Good-Bye.

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The Obituary for Marvin Junior, Lead Singer of The Dells



January 31, 1936 - May 29, 2013

The planet is a little quieter, as R&B music lovers everywhere celebrate a life well lived and the seemingly untimely death of a legend, Marvin Junior, the lead singer of The Dells, 2004 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Inductees. Junior, age 77, died on Wednesday, May 29, 2013, with family members by his side at his home in Harvey, Illinois, from complications associated with kidney failure.

The Man Behind The Music

From blues to jazz, doo-wop to R&B, Marvin Junior possessed a vocal range that put fellow crooners on notice, women on red-hot alert, and earned him the moniker of the greatest lead singer in the world. He possessed a vocal range and ability that seldom appear in a cycle of lifetimes. Amazing achievements all, considering that Junior made his entry to the planet as quietly as he left it.

Junior and Jessie Allison. Both parents preceded him in death. Junior was the oldest of four siblings: Nathaniel Dabon (deceased), Melvin Dabon (deceased) and, Jack Dabon. He moved to Harvey, Illinois, when he was only six months old. He was raised by his mother, maternal aunt and her husband, Frankie and Bill Boylen.

He was born on January 31, 1936, in the little out-of-the-way town of Harrell, Arkansas, the only child from the union of Richard



Junior's musical development was rooted in the church where he participated in the choir at a young age. He attributed his talent and love of music to his parents -- his voice from his mother who sang in a spiritual group, and his father who played guitar. When asked who else inspired him, he said, "We listened to groups like the Moonglows, the Five Keys and we've always liked Ray Charles.

By the time he was 14, singing emerged as his passion and catapulted him into a musical realm few have traveled.



He received his education at McKinley Grammar School and Thornton Township High School in Harvey, Illinois, and served in the U.S. Army Reserves and received an honorable discharge.

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Family Man

Junior married his one true love, companion and friend, Ruby Caldwell in 1960. During their 53-year marriage, they had six children, and 12 grandchildren. When asked why some of his contemporaries, other male entertainers, struggled and didn't have the support they needed during their elderly years, Junior once commented, "Marrying the right woman, a good woman, like Ruby, makes all the difference. I married the right one."

When home, Junior loved to watch old western movies. The ones with John Wayne were his favorite. He enjoyed conversations related to politics and international affairs. A brilliant, quick thinker with great musical and comedic timing, he delighted in taking care of his family and getting out to visit others in the local community. He prepared all family meals, loved to grocery shop for family and neighbors, participated in community events and even once dabbled with owning a restaurant. An avid fisherman, he loved to cook what he caught. His house served as the pit stop for artists living in and touring through the Chicago area, and an oasis for family and friends. He liked people -- all people -- from every walk of life. Marvin believed all people should be treated equally, fairly and with dignity, understanding the importance of meeting people where they are.



Off the road, he demonstrated his greatest passion and love for his family as a loving husband, father, grandfather and relative to many.

His Professional Life and The Mighty Dells



As a teenager, he helped form the musical group which would become The Dells, and which performed for over six decades, sold millions of records, and is considered the most enduring and endearing vocal group in music history.

They began in Harvey, Illinois in 1953 as five Thornton Township High School classmates who shared a love for the sound of doowop. Rehearsing in front of a local ice cream parlor, they attracted the attention of the music industry's leading groups, under whose guidance they began their recording career as the El Rays. Soon after, they re-christened themselves as the Dells. After being coached by Harvey Fuqua of the Moonglows on five-part vocal harmony and gaining experience as background touring and session singers, The Dells recorded the original "Oh What A Night" written by Marvin Junior and Johnny Funches in 1956 which became their first big seller. The rest is musical history, The Dells proved unstoppable.

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Marvin's voice, which has been described as a husky expression of polished mahogany wrapped in velvet, inspired Teddy Pendergrass (who admired him as a vocal mentor) and countless other male singers who emulated his grit, power and conviction. Junior embodied all of the qualities we today call swag. He did not set the standard for musical genius and vocal prowess. He was the standard -- the very personification of a masculine-voiced lead soul singer who defied imitation or replication. When Marvin Junior sang, you believed him, and listened as he laid every word, like bricks of a castle built for kings. He helped define for a generation what a male soul singer was expected to be: multi-talented, soulful, impeccably convincing, unwaveringly sure in his passions and love, the kind of persona women desired and men respected.

He was a mentor and teacher to many notable names in the music industry. Some even called him "Dad."

The fabric of his private life, including his friendship with The Dells members, was unshakably tight and incorruptible. To describe them as close-knit would be an understatement. So much so, that it was their collective family story that inspired the movie, *The Five Heartbeats*, by Robert Townsend. The Dells recording of the film's George Duke-produced theme song *A Heart Is A House For Love* became a hit, introducing the group to a brand new generation.



In 2004, The Mighty Dells were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, which is the highest honor achievable in the music industry. The Dells documentary aired on NBC and won an Emmy Award. The Dells have also racked up an astonishing (46) rhythm and blues chart records, including (3) number one R&B hits; (7) gold singles, (3) gold albums, plus 25 charted top 40 hits. They are recipients of the "Rhythm & Blues Foundation's Pioneer Hall of Fame Award", "24th Annual NAACP's Image Award", "The Soul Of American Music Award", "Illinois NARAS Governors Award" the "Jackie Awards", and many lifetime achievement awards from Governors and Mayors.

The Dells have toured around the world and performed for ordinary and extraordinary people, Presidents, Kings and Queens. They have worked with some of the greatest writers, musicians and producers such as: Quincy Jones, Carl Davis, George Duke, Bobby Miller, and Gamble and Huff. They have shared a stage with

hundreds of music greats and icons such as Etta James, Dinah Washington, Ray Charles, Four Freshmen, Bo Diddley, Jackie Wilson, Aretha Franklin, Sammy Davis, Jr., Gladys Knight and the Pips, Barry White, The Four Tops, The O'Jays, The Whispers, and Tom Dreesen, Comedian (dear friend), to name a few.



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THE MIGHTLY DELLS: Verne Allison, Charles Barksdale, Johnnie Carter (deceased) and Michael McGill; BAND MEMBERS AND THE DELLS PROFESSIONAL TEAM: Anthony Allison, Tim Allison, Tony Allison, Derris Bolton, Donald "Tutu" Brackens, Nigel Byrd, Maurice Calloway, Rick Hall, William "Bill" Harden, Danny Johnson, LC Johnson, Marvin Junior, Jr. (son), Lloyd "Buzzy" Pridgeon, Winston Sawyers, David Service, Wayne Stephens, Mark Williams, and Nina-Dawne Williams, Esq.



A Special Note

Junior was known for his unbridled candor, honesty, fairness, humor, fun-loving nature, and being a down-to-earth, genuine gent. He was a man's man. Junior was paradoxically shy outside of his public life. The Dells often teased Marvin about his reluctance to have the spotlight shine on him in contrast to his absolute dominance of the stage as soon as he began to sing.



To his millions of fans, Junior measured himself against the audience's response. His family believes it was the driving force that inspired him to sing for six decades from his heart and the deepest depth of his soul. Giving each note, each song, each concert a thundering delivery. Every performance had to be memorable. That is why he asked his family to forego a public funeral or memorial upon his passing. He wanted the memory of brilliance in motion to be his way of saying farewell without saying good-bye. He believed music is the food of love, and to the fans, he would say, "play on -- it's going to be alright... right on... right on."

Marvin Junior's voice continues to be the quintessential voice of Soul Music. There will never be his equal. He will be greatly missed.

Marvin is Survived By

WIFE of 53 years Ruby Junior; BROTHER Jack Dabon (Pam); SIX CHILDREN: Faye Jones (Vincent), Marvin Junior, Jr. (Natalie), LaTanya Junior, Shawn Junior, Toia Junior and Todd Junior (Brandy); 12 GRANDCHILDREN: Jazmine Junior, Jordon Jones, Rayven Junior, Diamond Junior, Lakiya Fondren, Kalia Fondren, Marley Junior, Tahjanae Junior, Marvin Junior III, Jade Junior, Todd Junior, Liyah Junior; beloved SISTERS-IN-LAW: Patricia, Katie, Elizabeth, Roberta, and Mamie; dear COUSINS: Lena B. White, Doris Allison, Ernestine Allison, Lorenzo Allison, Linda T. Adams, Albert Juniell, Leonard and Donna Juniell, and Leatrice; special family friend, Anita Estell, Esq.; and a host of other family and friends.

Share memories or offer personal expressions on how the man with the *greatest voice in the world* touched and warmed your hearts and souls by logging into:

www.themightydellsmarvinjunior.com The Junior family All Rights Reserved.

The Junior family would like to thank all the fans, press and the following medical experts for their loving support and care: Dr. Nisha-Chandra Strobos, Chief of Cardiology at Johns Hopkins Bayview, Janice Wilson, Nurse, Janie Martello, Nurse, Olufunmike Aina, Nurse, and University of Chicago to name a few.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that contributions be made in the name of Marvin Junior.

You may send a check to the **Division of Cardiology at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center**
4940 Eastern Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland 21224