



## Mr. Howard E. Neal

March 18, 1942 - January 1, 2025

Renowned musician, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, Howard Eugene Neal was born on March 18, 1942, in Alton, Illinois to the late Joseph Williams and Mable (Neal) Meeks, Howard built a remarkable life as a strong, positive, hard-working, ambitious, and God-fearing man. Affectionately known as “Gene” by his family, Howard grew up surrounded by music. His mother, Mable, and sister, Donna, were gifted vocalists, while his brothers, Jerry and Stanley, excelled as accomplished pianists. Howard’s journey of faith began early, profoundly shaped by the unwavering guidance of his grandmother, Letha Everette, the family matriarch. Her steadfast influence nurtured a strong spiritual foundation within the family, who were dedicated members of St. John Missionary Baptist Church. In later years, Howard joined St. James Baptist Church, where he shared his musical talents as a drummer for the choir and remained an active and cherished member of the congregation.

Howard was a proud father to three children, his sons, Darrin Neal of Kansas City, Missouri, Kelton (Shannon) Neal of Kansas City, Missouri and daughter, Olivia Neal of Florissant, Missouri. He also embraced a fatherly role

in the lives of his extended family, including Eric and Kim Perry and Corey Neal, exemplifying his love and guidance beyond his immediate family.

His unwavering dedication to family and community was evident in his interactions with everyone he met. “Sit down and let me talk to you” was a familiar phrase to many young people in the Alton community who had the privilege of crossing paths with him. Howard generously shared his wisdom about life and his deep passion for music, inspiring countless aspiring musicians. Through his band leadership, performing, producing, writing, and recording, he left an indelible mark on the music industry in Alton, Illinois.

A man of many firsts, Howard was the first of his siblings to join the military, serving in Alaska for three years. He was also the first in his immediate family to attend college, enrolling at Tennessee State University. Howard broke barriers as the first African American hired at Marathon Oil Pipeline in Wood River, Illinois. He was also a trailblazer in the Alton community, building and operating his own in-house recording studio, where he collaborated with regional favorites such as The Montclairs, Phil Perry, Jimmie Green, Carletta Sue, Pete and Cheez, Karlton Clanton, and many more. His work gained international acclaim, with several productions achieving popularity in the UK and a mention in Billboard magazine. One of his most cherished achievements was the release of a compilation of his work by The Numero Group record label in Chicago, Illinois, titled “Eccentric Soul: The Shoestring Label.”

Howard Eugene Neal passed away peacefully on January 1, 2025, at the age of 82. He was preceded in death by his wife, Lavern (Slack) Neal; parents; sister, Donna (Meeks)

Lafayette and two brothers, Gerald Meeks and John Meeks Jr.

Howard is survived by his brother, Stanley Meeks of Edwardsville, IL; a sister, Joann Willams of South Carolina; three children; grandchildren, Miles, India, Kele, Joshua, and Drue; great-grandson, Jayce and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, and dear friends.

His memory will live on through his music and the countless lives he touched.

# Cemetery Details

## Upper Alton Cemetery

Oakwood Rd  
Alton, IL 62002

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JAN 10. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Greater St. James Baptist Church  
2016 Belle Street  
Alton, IL

## Service

JAN 10. 11:00 AM (CT)

Greater St. James Baptist Church  
2016 Belle Street  
Alton, IL

## Graveside

JAN 10 (CT)

Upper Alton Cemetery  
Oakwood Rd  
Alton, IL 62002



# Tribute Wall



“ *Cathy M Williams & Sons FH created a Tribute Video in memory of Mr. Howard E. Neal*



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**Cathy M Williams & Sons FH** - January 10, 2025 at 05:48 PM



“ *Erica Holliday lit a candle in memory of Mr. Howard E. Neal*



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**erica holliday** - February 11, 2025 at 03:24 PM



“ *Dana Clinton lit a candle in memory of Mr. Howard E. Neal*



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**Dana Clinton** - January 10, 2025 at 11:16 AM

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“ Elder James C Thompson (Peach) lit a candle in memory of Mr. Howard E. Neal



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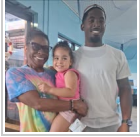
Elder James c Thompson (Peach) - January 09, 2025 at 04:22 PM

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“ I could spend at least 24 hours talking about my acquaintance with Mr Howard Neal. He was more than a friend to me, he was my mentor who taught me a great deal about professional music. He came to my home when I was about 12 years old to get permission from my mother to take me out into perform with him, he promised her he would take care of me and keep me out of trouble and that he did. I truly enjoyed my acquaintance with him and learn so much about not only music but life as well. I would cherish my memories and times we spent together until the day that the most High God calls me to rest. He was truly an inspiration to me as well as mentor in long with someone to look up to with respect. We had talked about doing another performance together as we had done so many times before but I would imagine that the most high God had other plans. It is good to know that he is now in a better place and has touched so many people as he came through this life. My prayers and heartfelt condolences I now offer to his family and children that they will have peace and comforted heart knowing that their father did well for them and may he rest in peace.

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Elder James c Thompson (Peach) - January 09, 2025 at 04:18 PM



“ *Freida Lynette lit a candle in memory of Mr. Howard E. Neal*



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**Freida Lynette** - January 07, 2025 at 11:50 PM



“ *Joyce Perry lit a candle in memory of Mr. Howard E. Neal*



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**Joyce Perry** - January 07, 2025 at 07:26 PM



“ *Howard was a joy to perform with and a valuable member of the Miles Davis Jazz Festival Committee.*

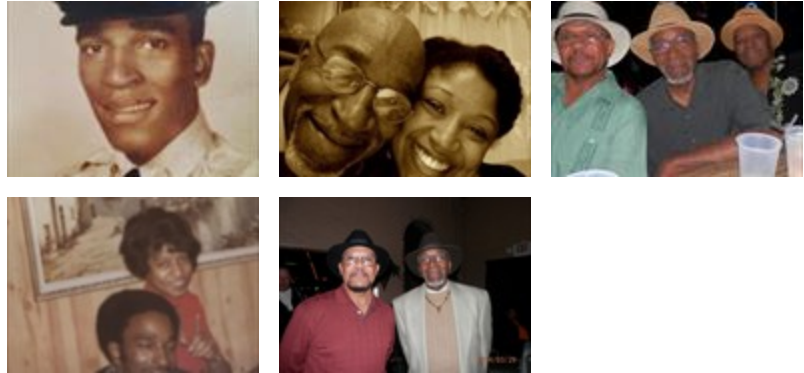


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**Lorenzo Lorenzo** - January 06, 2025 at 10:45 PM



“ 21 files added to the album Memories Album



Cathy M Williams & Sons FH - January 06, 2025 at 08:29 PM



“ From the family of Vernelle Lott. purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Mr. Howard E. Neal.



From the family of Vernelle Lott. - January 06, 2025 at 04:35 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Mr. Howard E. Neal.



January 06, 2025 at 11:24 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Mr. Howard E. Neal.

January 06, 2025 at 11:24 AM



“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



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**Cathy M Williams & Sons FH** - January 04, 2025 at 06:26 PM