

Obituary

Willie Lee Topps, Sr. was born to Samuel Topps and LouBerda Hill on April 10, 1919 in Tangipahoa, Louisiana. After the passing of both of his parents, he was raised by family members in Louisiana. Racism and injustice forced him at the age of 14 years old to escape the deep south on freight trains heading to Chicago. It was here in the Windy City that he made his life and met his wife Cozetta B. Archer thru her sister, who was his sister-in-law.

Willie always said that when he met Cozetta he knew that she would be his wife. They married and were blessed with four children. A member of Antioch Baptist Church, along with his wife, he remained a faithful member until health and age would no longer allow him to participate in regular church services.

Willie loved his family, his home, growing his tomatoes, eating Cozetta's sweet potato pies and hot sauce. Many times, during his working career, he often held three to four jobs ensuring that his family was well provided for. His children were taken care of and had everything they needed. He bought three homes in his life time, was well liked by everyone he encountered, was a no nonsense kind of man and would give you the shirt off his back if you were his family or friend. He took good care of his wife's family.

Willie was a plumber by trade but held many different jobs (Tootsie Roll, Hyson, Joslyn companies). He was not afraid of hard work and often told stories of the war where he lived in his boots for over a year. After hearing those stories – you knew it to be true he was not afraid to work.

Willie entered the military and served in both the Army and Air Force during his service career. He was most proud of his ability to travel all over the world and serve his country. Staff Sergeant Topps was the last of the World War II tankers from the pioneer 78th Tank Battalion, re-designated the 758th Tank Battalion in 1941. At Camp Hood, he served as cadre for the 761st Tank Battalion and trained them in all phases of armored warfare. In combat, he returned to the 758th Tank Battalion where they supported the 92nd Infantry Division (the Buffalo Division) in Italy.

After the war, as a member of the Chicago Chapter of the 761st Tank Battalion & Allied Veterans Association, Willie met regularly with chapter members in his basement. This "man cave" became their headquarters adorned with memorabilia depicting their combat history. They conducted chapter business and discussed their experiences echoing humor and heroism. They began with about 30 members in the 1950's and by 2006, the group had declined to seven members. In 2016, Willie became 758th's sole survivor and said at that time, "Father Time and Mother Nature is beating the living hell out of us". At age 98 years, he joins his comrades - "soldiers at rest".

Willie was an amazing husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather, great great grandfather, brother, uncle, neighbor and friend. He joins his wife Cozetta (who preceded him in death), and leaves behind an amazing legacy – children Juanita, Loretta, LouBerda and Willie Jr. (Tamara). A host of grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great great grandchildren, along with nieces, nephews, neighbors, co-workers, friends, acquaintances, caretakers, his barber, Kent Saulsberry, pedicurists Regina and Tiffany; masseuse, Ron and three special caregivers, Raven, Torrey and Joy that supported him in his later years.

Pallbearers

Family and Friends

Good-bye Good Friend

Where do I go from here, This is the strangest feeling I ever felt
I've gotten so used to you being here, Can't get used to this emptiness
Because we've travelled so many roads together;

We've been through ups and downs
It's hard to realize that the time has come,
To say good-bye good friend
I'll see you again on the other side
Good-bye good friend

It's through love and faith we'll share the victory
Very soon we'll share eternity

I know I'm thinking selfishly, Cause where you're gone's a better place
But this feeling that's come over me, The pain's so deep I can't explain
It feels like something inside of me, its tearing away

Oh, the hurt; Oh, the pain

I know I've got to come to grips within
In my mind I've got to say
Good-bye good friend
I wanted you to stay

But now you've gone away
Some people say it's the end of the road
They say that's it
There ain't no more
But He promises that we will rise again
That's when I'll see you my friend.

Acknowledgement

The family of **Willie Lee Topps, Sr.** acknowledges with gratitude and appreciation all acts of kindness, sympathy, expressions of love, thoughtfulness and compassion to our

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