

## John Graham Lancaster

January 31, 1918 - July 01, 2008 at the age of 90

Laid to Reston Thursday, July 10, 2008 in the Oddfellows Cemetery in Farmville, Virginia

John Graham Lancaster, 90, of California, MD, died on July 1, 2008 in St. Mary's Hospital in Leonardtown, MD after a brief illness. Born on January 31, 1918 in Farmville, VA, he was the son of the late John Wesley Lancaster and Annie Moss Lancaster.

John accepted Christ at an early age and was an active member of First Baptist Church, Farmville VA, serving as choir director. He received his early education in Prince Edward County. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture from Hampton University (formerly Hampton Institute), a Master's in Adult Education from George Washington University, and an Advanced Graduate Specialist degree from the University of Maryland in Agriculture and Extension Education.

Throughout his life, John was a consistent voice for quality education and citizen participation in government. In 1940, after graduating from Hampton, John returned to his native Prince Edward County to succeed his father as the Negro county extension agent. His job was abolished in 1955, in retaliation for his involvement in the fight for equal education, after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was rendered by the Supreme Court.

In 1957, after working for North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company in Richmond, VA for a year, John moved his family to St. Mary's County to work as an extension agent. He worked as a 4-H agent in the county, and later as a program specialist at the University of Maryland in College Park.

After retiring in 1978, he devoted himself to volunteering - serving as chair of the Housing Authority, chair of the Youth Commission, and a director of the Cedar Lane Apartments. In addition, he was appointed to the St. Mary's County Board of Education. In 1982, John ran unsuccessfully for County Commissioner of St. Mary's County; however, he came back for a successful run in 1986, becoming the first Black elected to the post. He was re-elected for a second term in 1990.

John was a member of many civic, religious, and community organizations. He was a deacon at First Missionary Baptist Church. He was also a member of the Democratic Club

of St. Mary's County, Lexington Park Lions Club, Minority Business Alliance, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Randolph Lodge Number 30 Free and Accepted Masons of Farmville, VA., Tau Lambda Lambda Chapter, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Jolly Gents Sportsman's Club, Salt and Pepper, and the National Epsilon Sigma Phi Extension Fraternity. He served as president of the National Association of 4-H Agents in 1972.

As a result of John's tireless efforts in his community, he received numerous awards, honors, and citations. Among them were: St. Mary's County Democrat of the Year (2001), National 4-H Hall of Fame (Inaugural Class), Who's Who Among Black Americans (1988), Distinguished Personalities of the South and Outstanding Leaders of America (both in 1972). One of his most prized recognitions came in 2001 with the dedication of a 47-acre park named in his honor (The John G. Lancaster Park at Willows Road in Lexington Park, MD).

At the time of his death, John lived at the Cedar Lane Apartments in Leonardtown, where he enjoyed fellowship and camaraderie with the other residents. He was a board member emeritus of Lott Enterprises, a minority corporation. His connection to his birthplace was never far from his mind - and he was looking forward to celebrating the 100th year anniversary of the purchase of his family homeplace, affectionately known as Restful Acres. His dedication to its renovation and preservation will be celebrated in August at the annual Lancaster Family Reunion.

John was predeceased by his first wife, Thelma Porter Lancaster, and his second wife, Albertine Thomas Lancaster. He is survived by the children of his first marriage - a son, John G. Lancaster, Jr. of San Francisco, CA, and a daughter, Shirley Elaine Gholston of Greenbelt, MD - a grandson, Bruce J. Lancaster, granddaughter-in-law, LaShawn A. Lancaster, two great-grandsons, Miles Christian and Cole Wesley Lancaster, all of Clinton, MD; two sisters, Thelma L. Coleman of Philadelphia, PA and Mary Ann Wilson of Houston, TX; two sisters-in-law, Mary Bullock of Morrisville, NC and Audrey Whitehead of Murfreesboro, NC; two brothers-in-law, William C. Keen of Roanoke, VA and Raymond Whitehead of Murfreesboro, NC; a host of nieces, nephews and other extended family members.

The family will receive friends for John's Life Celebration on Tuesday, July 8, 2008 from 6-9:00 PM at First Missionary Baptist Church, 47359 Lincoln Ave., Lexington Park, MD 20653. Acknowledgments at 7:00 PM. Homecoming Service will be celebrated on Wednesday, July 9, 2008 at 11:00 AM (Viewing one hour before service) at First Missionary Baptist Church.

The final Homegoing Service will be celebrated on Thurs. July 10, 2008 1:00 PM at the First Baptist Church, Farmville, VA, followed by interment at Oddfellows Cemetery in Farmville, VA.

Memorial contributions may be made to the First Missionary Baptist Church Building Fund, P.O. Box 1663, Lexington Park, MD 20653.