



John Hubert Richardson

John Hubert Richardson, known for his calm demeanor and dedication to education, passed away on February 18, 2024, at the age of 100.

Born on October 7, 1923, in Richmond Hospital on Staten Island, New York, John was the eldest child of Joseph and Drucilla Richardson, who emigrated to the United States from the island of Anguilla, British West Indies. Lovingly known as "Hugh" to his family and close friends, he spent his early childhood years in Perth Amboy, New Jersey and in 1929 at age 6, Hugh and his younger siblings, Joseph and Dorothy, went to live in Anguilla with their aunt and cousins, while his parents remained in the United States to save and be able to offer their children a better life.

In 1934, at age 11, Hugh and his siblings returned to the United States and lived with their parents in Harlem, New York. He attended Cooper Junior High School in Harlem and graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School in the Bronx in 1942.

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John was also a loyal member of the Anguilla Benevolent Society, holding several offices during the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Committed to his Anguilla community, Hugh served as President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Sergeant at Arms throughout his years of service. The members of the Anguilla Benevolent Society and their community played an integral role in his life. John also held membership in the Mason's King Solomon Grand Lodge, Covenant Lodge No. 6.

John H. Richardson was a World War II Veteran. He enlisted in the Army in 1943 and received an Honorable Discharge in 1946. John served in the 754th Medical Sanitary Company stationed in Germany. During this time the Army was segregated. John received the rank of Private First Class and earned several medals, including an American Campaign Medal, EAME Campaign Medal, Good Conduct Medal, and World War II Victory Medal. John's zest for education was seen when he enrolled in typing, Algebra, Word Study, English Composition, French, and Spanish while enlisted. Following his military service, John embarked on a career dedicated to education and public service. In 1951, John graduated from Long Island University earning a Bachelor's Degree and took graduate courses at Hunter College from 1961-1966.

On February 14, 1959, John married Zelma Brooks-Williams and moved to the Bronx. Through their union they had a daughter, Omiyinka Kathleen. John also gained two bonus daughters, Melonie and Cerise.

John began his career as an elementary school teacher for the N.Y.C. Board of Education in 1961, working in East Harlem. He was a dutiful and compassionate teacher who spent many hours creating posters, charts, flash cards and other manipulatives to enhance his students' learning. He was known for his immaculate penmanship, and he enjoyed throwing holiday parties for his students. Throughout his tenure, John took Spanish classes so that he was able to communicate with the many Spanish speaking families in his school community. In true Caribbean style, John usually held a second job and worked evenings as a Teacher-in-Charge of after school centers in Harlem, supervising middle and high school students. There he was affectionately known as Mr. Rich.

In addition to his commitment to education, John was a connoisseur of music with a deep love for Jazz, which he cherished throughout his life. He had an impressive collection of albums, reel-to-reel tapes, cassettes, DVDs, and CDs filled with the jazz greats and lots of stereo equipment to enjoy his music. One of his favorite pastimes was discussing, enjoying, and exchanging music with his friends. His passion for music was matched only by his gentle nature and unwavering integrity.

John was a shining example of a man, known for his charming demeanor and the quiet strength with which he carried himself. He commanded respect through his actions and inspired those around him with kindness and compassion.

In 1988, after 27 years of teaching, John retired and continued to live a full and busy life. During his early retirement John traveled to Egypt and Kenya. Then he occupied his time with daily classes at the United Federation of Teachers and several Senior Citizens Centers in the Bronx and Harlem. He enrolled in music composition, guitar, bridge, Spanish, Tai Chi, swimming, and line dancing classes. John loved to dance and for many years would attend weekly dance parties at the Palladium Theatre, Roseland Ballroom, and Jazz at Lincoln Center. John was a generous family man who never forgot a birthday. You could bank on your birthday card and check each year. He was also known for gifting yearly magazine subscriptions to National Geographic, Ebony, and Jet, and distributed The Amsterdam News, Carib News, Caribbean Life and Our Times Press newspapers to his family and friends. He wanted you to always be informed.

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John lived a full, active, and independent life, doing his own shopping, cooking, laundry, and driving until the age of 97! During his final years he lived with his daughter and her family in Brooklyn, enjoying the daily activities of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and watching his family grow. He thrived through the pandemic and maintained his wit and wisdom. As John would often say, he was "doing all that could be done; grinning and bearing and rolling with the punches."

The last of his generation, John Hubert Richardson's extraordinary life will be celebrated by his Daughters Omiyinka and Melonie; Son-in-Law Byron; Grandchildren Olatunji, Assata, Nkosazana, Nandi, Bahati, and Yohance; Great-grandchildren Nassor, Aminata, Omolara, Ayolewa, Hasani, Kosemani, Gyasi, and Kazembe; Nieces Erleen, Deborah, and Joyce; Nephew Roy; Great-nieces Crystal, Stanaisha, Sheryl, Shardie, Theresa, Dara, and Diane; and a host of cousins, other family members and friends too numerous to mention in the United States, Anguilla, and St. Thomas. Together they embody the rich tapestry and legacy that John has woven.

John Hugh Richardson, was a devoted family man, cherished teacher, and honored veteran, whose century of life was marked by wisdom, strength, and resilience. His legacy of service, love, dedication, and kindness will continue to live in the hearts and memories of those he touched. A true pillar of the community, his profound impact and unwavering spirit will forever remain, lighting and guiding the way of future generations.