



Mr. Bezelee Martin

September 29, 1932 - July 27, 2021

Bezelee Martin was born on September 29, 1932, to the union of Tom Martin Sr. and Ruth Mae Hall Martin in Gould, Arkansas. His family moved to Boley, Oklahoma and he received his early education in the Boley Public School System.

Bezelee accepted Christ at an early age and as a child he was a member of Ward Chapel AME Church in Boley where faith, perseverance, self-confidence, hard work, commitment to family, and service to others were fostered in a Christian home environment. After moving to Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1947, he became a member of Tabernacle Community Baptist Church where he was an active member of the Choir. It was at Tabernacle Community Baptist Church that Bezelee would meet the love of his life, Lena Mae Newell.

Bezelee and Lena were married on June 25, 1960, at Tabernacle Baptist Church and to this union four sons were born. Exposure to Black entrepreneurs from having been raised in Boley, OK, one of the most prominent Black towns in the early 20th century, influenced Bezelee for the rest of his life. Bezelee started several businesses during his adolescence including lawn services and concession stands. After moving to Milwaukee, WI and working various jobs, the entrepreneurial spirit nurtured in Boley, OK lead to the start of several businesses in the 1950's including Martin Hosiery, Martin Wholesale Grocery, and Martin Trucking. In 1965, Bezelee started Lena's Food Market and this business

remained a staple on the Northside of Milwaukee for over 50 years.

At one time Lena's was operating over 6 locations with greater than 600 employees. In 1969, Bezelee started Black Gem Brands, a line of canned vegetable and other household products that were sold in 8 Mid-western states.

Companies founded by Bezelee have won many awards including, but not limited to, the United States Department of Commerce Minority Retailer of the Year and Wisconsin Minority Business of the Year. Bezelee was interviewed for inclusion in The History Makers National Digital Archive in area of business. In addition, Bezelee's family business has been included in the Miller Brewing Company Gallery of Greats. In 2013, he was recognized for his 60 plus years of business success and was inducted into the Wisconsin Business Hall of Fame.

Bezelee, affectionately known as Bez, enjoyed fishing, traveling, investing, and providing personal and professional guidance. He is cherished as a loving husband, father, and grandfather.

Bezelee Martin departed this life on Tuesday, July 27, 2021, in Mequon, WI.

Preceding him in death are his parents, Tom and Ruth Mae Martin, siblings Bob Ollie Martin, Cyrus Martin, Mary Helen Burley, Cleophus Martin, Charles Martin, Lue Lee Tomlin, Samuel Martin, and Tom Martin, Jr.

Bezelee Martin leaves to embrace his spirit and mourn his loss: his devoted wife, Lena; his four sons, Eric Charles Martin of Chicago, IL, Anthony (Sabrina) Martin of Milwaukee, WI; Derrick Carnell Martin of Milwaukee, WI, and Gregory (LuVerda) Martin of Mequon, WI; eight grandchildren, Anthony Justin, Ashley Alexandria, Halle Miranda, Alaya Niko, Alexis Alena, Gabrielle Lena, Blair Wanda, and Lindsey Priscilla. Also left to cherish his memory are his brother, Bruce (Tamara) Martin of River Hills, WI and sisters Clemmytine Lyday of Upland, CA, Alice Duke of Oklahoma City, OK, and sister-in-law Laura Newell, Southhaven, MS. He also leaves to celebrate his life a host of cousins, nieces, nephews, and beloved friends.

Cemetery Details

Wisconsin Memorial Park

13235 W. Capitol Dr.
Brookfield, WI

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG 1. 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Northwest Funeral Chapel
6630 W. Hampton Ave
Milwaukee, WI

Visitation

AUG 2. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Tabernacle Community Baptist Church
2500 W. Medford Ave
Milwaukee, WI

Funeral Service

AUG 2. 12:00 PM (CT)

Tabernacle Community Baptist Church
2500 W. Medford Ave
Milwaukee, WI

Tribute Wall

PT

“ You will be missed the eldest of my mother's eldest sister. I know you hung around here for as long as you could and I am sure you grew weary and that you were ready to go. I will never forget your and your brothers attendance at mother's homegoing. It meant so very much as "I was feelin kinda bad," :) a quote from my all-time favorite movie "The Color Purple." It was in theaters that Christmas when you extended your hand to lift me up and invited me to spend that first Holiday season with you and your immediate families. It gave me direction and hope - in that gesture you also told me that you were there for me and that I had options. I was always so proud of our Milwaukee cousins and what you represented to our entire family. So, you are forever etched in my heart. I know you're watching, and I will make a conscious effort to make you proud. Cousin Pat

Pat Thornton - August 04, 2021 at 03:27 AM

BJ

“ Condolences to the family, friends and business associates of Bezelee Martin, one of the nation's hardest working and most successful business men. Bez was a tremendous contributor to my success in politics and business in Milwaukee, and his contribution to the city civically and economically is greatly appreciated and his presence will be greatly missed. I will have to stream his funeral service, but his family should know that I share their sorrow and that I will be with them in spirit..
Ben E. Johnson

Ben Johnson - August 02, 2021 at 12:09 PM

AC

“ Our prayers and deepest sympathy go out to the Martin family. We have lost a good man. May his soul rest in peace and may God comfort you during this difficult time
Anita Cobb



Anita Cobb - August 02, 2021 at 11:10 AM

LH

“ May God bless you the Martin Family, It was a blessing to have known Bezelee and Lena friends from Tabernacle Community Baptist Church. Good people are hard to find. he and his wife, were the (best). Lillian Childs Herron. over 50 years.

Lillian Herron - August 02, 2021 at 10:45 AM

RG

“ "My condolences to Lena and the entire Martin Family!"

-Rhoda Jones Goodwin



Rhoda Goodwin - August 02, 2021 at 09:57 AM

AL

“ Sending love and condolences to the Martin family.
ALICIA LOVE

Alicia Love - August 02, 2021 at 09:56 AM

SW

“ My condolences goes out to Martin family. Mr. Martin give my first and I can still remember those speeches he use to give about hard work and save your money. Rest in peace.

Stacey Williams

Stacey Williams - August 02, 2021 at 09:52 AM

MC

“ My condolences to the entire Martin Family! Bezelee led a wonderful life working to enhance our community as well as being a great husband and father/family man. Grace and Mercy, Michelle Crockett

Michelle Crockett - August 02, 2021 at 12:43 AM

BC

“ Bessie & Leslie Cobb purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Mr. Bezelee Martin.



Bessie & Leslie Cobb - August 01, 2021 at 07:16 PM

WP

“ Sending love and condolences to the Martin family.

Willie and Hilda Perkins - August 01, 2021 at 04:27 PM

WP

“ Sending love and condolences to the Martin family.

Willie, Hilda and Janice Perkins - August 01, 2021 at 04:24 PM

SU

“ Shinya, Chantelle, Kaji and Eeza Uehara purchased the Dreams From the Heart Bouquet for the family of Mr. Bezelee Martin.



Shinya, Chantelle, Kaji and Eeza Uehara - August 01, 2021 at 03:44 PM

PM

“ Pauline Mitchell lit a candle in memory of Mr. Bezelee Martin



Pauline Mitchell - August 01, 2021 at 03:00 PM

UT

“ Un abrazo de JGMA team. purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Mr. Bezelee Martin.



Un abrazo de JGMA team. - July 30, 2021 at 12:55 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Mr. Bezelee Martin.



July 30, 2021 at 10:03 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Mr. Bezelee Martin.*



July 30, 2021 at 09:48 AM



“ *Ruby M. purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Mr. Bezelee Martin.*



Ruby M. - July 29, 2021 at 05:44 PM



“ *Ron & Janelle Smalls lit a candle in memory of Mr. Bezelee Martin*



Ron & Janelle Smalls - July 29, 2021 at 03:27 PM



“ *Sorry to hear about the loosing of your brother, Bruce. My prayers are with you and your family. God bless you. Evangelist Denise. St. Mark.*

Evangelist Denise Griffin - July 29, 2021 at 12:08 PM

PB

"Heart felt condolences Bruce, I pray Comfort and Strength for the Family"

Pastor Sandra D. Banks, Jerusalem Empowered AMEC

Pastor Sandra D. Banks - July 31, 2021 at 11:08 AM

JT

“ *Jackie Thornton lit a candle in memory of Mr. Bezelee Martin*



Jackie Thornton - July 29, 2021 at 11:14 AM

JT

“ *While we all know that no one can live forever, it is still difficult to experience the death of a loved one. This world is better because of Bezelee Martin. Of all of his accomplishments, most of all Bez was a devoted husband and father. May God comfort and strengthen the Martin family, and the entire Hall Dutcher family.*
With Love & Respect,
Jackie Thornton

Jackie Thornton - July 29, 2021 at 11:10 AM