



## Mr. Martenzie Barnett

June 15, 1932 - July 21, 2025

Martenzie Barnett was born on June 15, 1932 in Gibson County, Tennessee, to Savannah and Luther Barnett. Throughout his childhood Martenzie -- better known as Bubba or Mr. Barnett -- worked a collection of jobs to support the family. He worked the family farm, loaded feed at the local general store, and even drove a hearse at his father's funeral home.

Martenzie attended elementary and middle school in Mt. Orange, Tennessee, the location of the only schools for Black children. At 18, Martenzie left school and sought a different and better life outside of the Jim Crow South. He initially planned to move out west to California, but instead settled on Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the early 1950s.

Soon after moving to Milwaukee, Martenzie met Ola Mae Marshall after the two were set up on a blind date. But before the relationship could properly bloom, Martenzie was drafted into the U.S. Army during the Korean War conflict and was shipped out to Austria in 1953. He rose to the rank of corporal during his three years of service, writing letters to his sweetheart Ola while he was away.

Following an honorable discharge from the Army in 1955, Martenzie returned to Milwaukee and gained employment as a machinist at local manufacturing company Allis-Chalmers, where he worked for the next 28 years. Within a

year of his return from the armed services, Martenzie and Ola married on May 10, 1956. The couple eventually founded Barnett's Grocery Store on 34th Street and Mt. Vernon Avenue, a.k.a "The Hill," and later Martenzie bought his first rental property in the city near the intersection of 11th Street and Meinecke Avenue.

For a time during the 1970s, Martenzie worked all three of those jobs simultaneously, spending his mornings at the properties and grocery store and the second shift at the manufacturing plant. When the family -- which grew to two daughters and a son by 1961 -- would drive down south to visit Trenton and Ola's birthplace, Medon, Tennessee, Martenzie would make the entire 500-mile drive off of minimal sleep from his multiple jobs. On those trips, he became devoted to Shell gas stations, which at the time was one of the few places that allowed Black people to use the restroom.

But in 1975, at just the age of 45, Martenzie retired from the plant and store. His rental property portfolio eventually grew to over a dozen units, a number he maintained for over three decades. That success allowed Martenzie and Ola to take their first ever vacation around 1975, when they spent two weeks in Hawaii. That was just the beginning of their travels: they went on multiple cruises to the Caribbean and Alaska and a countless number of trips to Las Vegas. In the early 1990s, Martenzie finally made it to California, where his son Keith was living at the time.

Back in Milwaukee, Martenzie loved to have family over for gatherings, go out to dinner at restaurants, visit casinos (most notably their penny slot machines), and attend Brewers and Bucks sports games. In 2021, he attended the NBA Finals in person between the Bucks and Phoenix Suns, which the Bucks eventually won in six games.

Martenzie accepted Christ at Mt. Pilgrim Christian Methodist Episcopal

Church in Trenton, Tennessee. He joined Calvary Baptist Church in Milwaukee in the 1980s, and in his later years he became a member of Progressive Baptist Church, where he fellowshiped until his time of death.

Martenzie Barnett departed this life on July 21, 2025. He was preceded in death by his parents, Savannah and Luther Barnett; his nine siblings Will, Rebecca, Mildred, Sam, Luther, Margaret, Katherine, Bessie Mae and Florence; his son Martin Keith Barnett; and his great-grandsons Rashad Buggs-Barnett and Royce Jamir Riley.

He leaves behind his devoted wife Ola Barnett; daughters Paula (Dwayne) Bost and Michille Barnett (Richard Lackey); daughter-in-law Sherry Barnett; grandchildren Jamila (Reggie) Riley, Nicole Barnett, Jennifer Johnson, Eric (Ashley) Johnson II, Martenzie (Tierra) Johnson, and, Anthony Bost; great-grandchildren: Ryan Buggs-Barnett, Romond Buggs-Barnett, Jada Burnley-Barnett, Jalen McFadden, Mackenzie Johnson, Reginald Riley Jr., Eric Johnson III, Tenzie Johnson, Eko Missick, and Jae Johnson; great-great grandchildren Gabriel Buggs-Barnett, Aariah Buggs-Barnett, and Christian Buggs-Barnett; nephew and best friend Ernest Barnett; and a host of nieces, nephews, extended family and friends.

# Cemetery Details

## VA Union Grove Cemetery

21731 Spring Street  
Union Grove, WI

# Previous Events

## Visitation

AUG 2. 12:30 PM - 1:30 PM (CT)

Wisconsin Memorial Park - Chapel of the chimes  
13235 W Capitol Dr  
Brookfield, WI 53005-2499

## Funeral Service

AUG 2. 1:30 PM (CT)

Wisconsin Memorial Park - Chapel of the chimes  
13235 W Capitol Dr  
Brookfield, WI 53005-2499

# Tribute Wall

MS

“ Margaret S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mr. Martenzie Barnett.

Margaret S. - August 02, 2025 at 01:22 PM

BH

“ I shall never forget how generous your family was to us when our home caught fire. How we became more than friends. Family. Renee and I stayed with you until we could return home. Such a blessing!  
We love you and will always keep you in our prayers and hearts!

Barbara Harris-O'Neal - August 02, 2025 at 12:42 PM

CM

“ Claudette Shackelford McLinn and Michael purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Mr. Martenzie Barnett.



Claudette Shackelford McLinn and Michael - August 01, 2025 at 02:55 PM

CM

“ Claudette Shackelford McLinn and Michael planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mr. Martenzie Barnett.

Claudette Shackelford McLinn and Michael - August 01, 2025 at 02:55 PM

MW

“ *Mr. And Mrs. Dalon Williams purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Mr. Martenzie Barnett.*



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**Mr. And Mrs. Dalon Williams** - July 30, 2025 at 09:38 PM

SD

“ *Sam and Sandra Doaks purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Mr. Martenzie Barnett.*



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**Sam and Sandra Doaks** - July 29, 2025 at 11:39 PM

RI

“ *Prayers and Condolences to Family and Friends. May Christ Jesus be with you all.*  
*Richard & Vava Riley*

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**Richard** - July 27, 2025 at 09:36 PM

TM

“ *The Siblings of George & Selma Marshall purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Mr. Martenzie Barnett.*



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**The Siblings of George & Selma Marshall** - July 27, 2025 at 11:57 AM

KW

“ *Kim Woolridge purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Mr. Martenzie Barnett.*



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**Kim Woolridge** - July 26, 2025 at 03:22 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Mr. Martenzie Barnett.*



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July 25, 2025 at 01:33 PM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Mr. Martenzie Barnett.*

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July 25, 2025 at 01:33 PM

TF

“ *The Berry and Moore Families purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Mr. Martenzie Barnett.*



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**The Berry and Moore Families** - July 25, 2025 at 11:43 AM

LK

“ Love, The Hyler sisters (Linder & Kay) purchased the Blue Caribbean Bouquet for the family of Mr. Martenzie Barnett.



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**Love, The Hyler sisters (Linder & Kay)** - July 25, 2025 at 09:39 AM

LK

“ Love, The Hyler sisters (Linder & Kay) planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Mr. Martenzie Barnett.

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**Love, The Hyler sisters (Linder & Kay)** - July 25, 2025 at 09:39 AM

JF

“ Jackie Jackson and family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Mr. Martenzie Barnett.



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**Jackie Jackson and family** - July 24, 2025 at 10:51 PM

DJ

“ Diane Johnson lit a candle in memory of Mr. Martenzie Barnett



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**Diane Johnson** - July 24, 2025 at 10:34 PM

DJ

*My sincere condolences to all of the family. I Love Mrs Barnett. Mr Barnett will surely be missed. That smile and laughter and kindness*

**Diane Johnson** - July 24, 2025 at 10:36 PM

TT

*Sending Prayers and hugs*

**Tameko Tate** - July 24, 2025 at 11:34 PM

KP

*Uncle Bubba,  
You truly will be missed. You were always kind. Sending love to the family from Katrenna, Curtis, and David.*

**Katrenna Parnell** - October 31, 2025 at 01:24 PM