

## William Hawthorne Wiggins Jr.

May 30, 1934 - December 24, 2016

William Hawthorne Wiggins, Jr.

William Hawthorne Wiggins, Jr., Professor Emeritus of African American and African Diaspora Studies and Fellow in the Folklore Institute at Indiana University Bloomington, passed peacefully at IU Hospice House surrounded by the love of God and his family on December 24, 2016.

He was an incredible human being who made a tremendous impact on the lives many of students, colleagues, and friends. He had a great sense of humor and was a gifted story teller.

Bill was born May 30, 1934, in Port Allen, Louisiana to William H. Wiggins, Sr. and Mabel Leora Washington Wiggins.

He graduated from Central High School in Louisville, Kentucky where he enjoyed playing basketball and in 2012 was inducted into the Central High School's Alumni Hall of Fame. Bill attended Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, Ohio where he lettered as an outstanding tennis player.

Bill came to Bloomington in the fall of 1969 with his wife, Janice and their 3-year old daughter, Mary Ellyn, to enter the doctoral program in Indiana University's Folklore Institute. He became the first African American male to receive a PHD in Folklore. His previous academic training had been religious in nature: Ohio Wesleyan University (BA pre-theology), Phillip's School of Theology (B.D.), Atlanta, Georgia and Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary (M.TH.), Louisville, Kentucky.

As a graduate student he sought to supplement his Folklore Institute

fellowship by serving as the First Associate Instructor in the Afro-American Studies Department. He collaborated with Rozelle Boyd, then the Dean of University Division, and History graduate student John F. Moe, to develop the A150 Survey of the Culture of Black American, a course that remains the basic introduction to the department's curriculum. In addition, he created another course that remains a staple offering, The Black Church in America. He created and taught the course, "Sports and the Afro-American Experience". This course was featured in an ESPN documentary on collegiate student-athletes.

Bill's previous professional experiences include: Professor of Religion, Lane College, Jackson, Tennessee; Pastor at Freeman Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, Hopkinsville, Kentucky, and Director of Religious Life, Texas College, Tyler, Texas.

In 1993 Bill was promoted to the rank of full professor at Indiana University. Over the span of his career, Bill wrote and published extensively in various professional journals on topics ranging widely across his field of studies. Among these included: "O Freedom!" Afro-American Emancipation Celebration; The Rapture Family, a 60-minute color film; and The Rapture Family, a 30-minute film. He did extensive research and produced a promising manuscript on Joe Louis: American Folk Hero the National Boxing Champion. Because of this research he was awarded the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship. His research on Joe Louis was shared with the national audience via CBS Television late night show, "Night Watch".

Bill served on many University and National Committees and boards. For many years he served on the Indiana Historical Society Board. He consulted widely with many institutions as a member of the Smithsonian Institute Advisory Council. He represented the Institute in Ghana, Liberia, Jamaica, and Trinidad selecting traditional performers for the Festival of American Folklife. During his tenure he was asked to serve as interim chair of the African American and African Diaspora Studies Department; The Dean of the Office of African American Affairs; and the FASE Mentoring Program.

His life calling was teaching and he was the recipient of numerous teaching awards. He was the first recipient of two notable awards, the Dr. Herman B. Wells' Lifetime Achievement Award and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Building Bridges Award. The Dr. Herman B. Wells' Lifetime Achievement is presented to individuals who demonstrate overwhelming dedication and love for students and Indiana University. The Martin Luther King, Jr. Building Bridges Award is presented for dedicated service and outstanding leadership. Both awards truly exemplified Bill as a compassionate and dedicated teacher.

Students will always remember Bill fondly for he was and will be affectionately remembered as "Doc". He had an enormous impact on so many students' lives. As one former student recently wrote, "Bill may not know it, but he had a profound impact on me and my career. I believe he helped shape me to be able to earn the Dean position at the University Of Missouri School Of Journalism".

He and his wife, Janice were recognized as being living legends at Indiana University and in the Bloomington community. They have been influential figures in the lives of so many IU students both inside and outside the classroom, helping to create an environment that is welcoming, nurturing, and encouraging of student success. Most recently, the IU Athletic Department honored them among of the Elizabeth "Buzz" Kurpius Visionaries of Academic Excellence.

Bill's distinguished service and contribution to IU Athletics was named an honorary member of Indiana University's I-Men's Association. He also served four-years on the IUB Big Ten Conference Committee.

Even with his countless professional obligations and accomplishments Bill's interest was varied. He enjoyed writing a Community Column in the Herald Times entitled "Wiggy's Diner"; Bloomington's first literary diner and a weekly column in the Indianapolis Recorder, "Gumbo".

Bill's zest for life touched all those who knew him to the legions of former students, colleagues, and lifelong friends he leaves behind. He was a role

model and mentor to all who knew him – a man who was so loved. Bill was a devoted husband, a wonderful father and cherished family man.

Preceding him in death were his parents, and a brother, Hubert Wiggins, who died in infancy. He leaves behind a loving wife of 51-years, Janice Louise (Slaughter) Wiggins; his children, Wesley Howard and Mary Ellyn Wiggins; a grandson, William Howard Wiggins; a brother, Alfred (Barbara) and a sister, Anna (David) and a host of nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Visitation will be on Sunday, January 1, 2017 from 2pm to 5pm and from 6pm to 8pm at Allen Funeral Home and Crematory. A Celebration of Life will be held on Monday, January 2, 2017 at Lighthouse Community Church. There will be a 10am viewing with services starting at 11am. Memorial contribution may be made to the William H. Wiggins, Jr. Scholarship at the African American and African Diaspora Studies Department c/o the Indiana University Foundation, P.O. Box 6460, Indianapolis, Indiana 46206-6460. In addition, contributions can be made to the Indiana University Health Bloomington Hospice through the Indiana University Health Bloomington Foundation. You are invited to share a memory or leave an online condolence to Bill's family at [www.allencares.com](http://www.allencares.com)

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JAN 1. 6:00 AM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory  
4155 S. Old State Road 37  
Bloomington, IN 47401  
(812) 824-5905  
<http://www.allencares.com>

## Visitation

JAN 1. 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (ET)

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory  
4155 S. Old State Road 37  
Bloomington, IN 47401  
(812) 824-5905  
<http://www.allencares.com>

## Service

JAN 2. 11:00 AM (ET)

Lighthouse Community Church  
850 E. Winslow Rd  
Bloomington, IN 47401

# Tribute Wall

RC

“*Doc, I accepted my first tt position this this week, and dropped by to say thank you. Your wife had enough faith to bring me into IUB, and you were my first professor. My first graduate course was in the unit you built, you were the last person I saw when I left IU in '08. Throughout your career, you and your family made IU a much better place for people like me, and this (and many other) moments would not be possible without you. In one of our last conversations, you told me to go south, and make you proud. I hope to do that again. Until we meet again, Doc. -rjc*

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**Ryon Cobb** - February 22, 2018 at 03:40 AM

CG

“*Mary and Janice-- just know that I am breathing prayers for both of you during this season. You know, Daddy loves his girls, and the Lord will watch over and protect you both. Psalm 37 says that he lifts up the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds. It will take time, but he will surely do that for you. Love and prayers, Candy Gardner*



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**candy gardner** - January 10, 2017 at 03:25 PM

AN

“ Dear Janice, Mary Ellen, and Wes Wiggins,

*Well, it is for certain that Doc. Wiggins loved you all and it is for certain that you all loved him beyond what words could ever express. However, It is for certain that God loved him.*

*I witnessed how well you all took care of Doc. Wiggins on a daily all day basis. He was cared for like a King. You did everything humanly possible to ensure that he had the best of care. Janice might had to fire a few people along the way if they were not keeping up with the standards that she demanded in regards to the detailed care that she insisted that Doc Wiggins had everyday.*

*Janice often would run out in the middle of the night to get Doc. something that he would like to have for a late night snack such as a milk shake and or a hamburger and fries. She knew exactly what he liked and she made sure he had what he wanted at all times.*

*She watched over Doc Wiggins constant care without wavering. He loved the attention. She loved giving it to him. He was happy. He was home and he was safe. He was well cared for.*

*Janice and Doc. Wiggins are and forever will be a dynamic duo.*

*Now, I am sure that God, Doc. Wiggins, Rev. Ernest Daniel Butler, Rev. Anthony Gomez and so many other good Saints of God are having a great time in Heaven.*

*Therefore, Janice, Mary Ellen, Wes and the rest of the Wiggins Family do not let your heart be troubled and don't be sad too long. Mourn and then continue to celebrate Doc's legacy of faithful service to God, to others and to his family and his teaching and research career at Indiana University.*

*He is celebrating and singing the songs of Zion while he is walking around Heaven. He is home and he knows that you all are going to*

*be just fine. His spirit will be in your heart forever.*

*Thank you for sharing Doc, Wiggins with so many of us over the years. I love you all and I love Doc. Wiggins, He like you all have been there for me.*

*With a grateful heart,*

*Annie Willis*

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**Annie** - January 10, 2017 at 08:56 AM

MW

“ I am writing to express my condolences to your family on the passing of Dr. Wiggins.

*I grew up in West Lafayette as my father was a tenured Chemistry Professor at Purdue. My parents taught us to love and respect people of all backgrounds and I was driven to learn more about African American history when I arrived at Indiana University, because I believed that as a white male, at some point in my life, I would live with African American brothers and sisters and would want to be knowledgeable about their history.*

*I ended up taking two of Dr. Wiggins classes and thoroughly enjoyed his sense of humor and pride in his work. It was clear from day one that he loved his students and I, among them, loved him. There are only a few professors that made a personal impact on me and Dr. Wiggins was one of them and this dates back to more than 46 years. In fact, I still have a book of his that he published that I still keep in my personal library.*

*Later, I worked in the IU athletic department and appreciated his care for our student-athletes, which motivated me to do the same for the students that I served as sports promotion director and SAB co-advisor.*

*May Dr. Wiggins memory be a blessing forever and may we all emulate his warmth and love for humanity.*

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**Mike Wolinsky** - January 03, 2017 at 10:12 AM

CS

“ Charles and I are so very sorry for your loss and that we couldn't come to the visitation or service. We are both really sick with sore throats and coughs. Please know we are thinking of you and your family. Charles has shared some fond and fun memories of Bill with me. Charlene and Charles Sykes

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**Charlene Sykes** - January 02, 2017 at 01:04 PM

PM

“ Dear Janice & Mary Ellyn and family:  
May GOD hold you close at this difficult time and comfort you with rich memories of your lives together. We are very grateful to have known and worked with Bill as a student and as colleagues. He was well respected as a kind, generous and wonderful human being. May Bill rest in blessed peace.  
With heartfelt sympathies,



*Phyllis May-Machunda & Zachary Machunda*

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**Phyllis May-Machunda** - January 02, 2017 at 12:37 AM

KW

“ I write this on behalf of a former football student-athlete - my prayers are with his family.

*Kevin Winston 85-87*

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**Kevin Winston** - January 01, 2017 at 07:07 PM

DK

“ Dear Janice and Mary.

*I should be with you today and tomorrow. However, I am bothered by a miserable head cold. I would like to see you in person but I know I am contagious.*

*Please accept my sincere sympathy at the loss of Dr. Wiggins. You both have been so faithful in staying with him during his last mile. This will be consoling to you in the future.*

*Again, I am sorry for your loss but know he is with His Savior and rejoicing in good health.*

*Fondly, Dot Korb*

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**Dorothy K Korb** - January 01, 2017 at 03:07 PM

MI

“ Mirka purchased the Healing Tears - All White for the family of William Hawthorne Wiggins Jr..



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**Mirka** - January 01, 2017 at 12:16 PM

MS

“ Mrs. Janice and Mary Ellen Wiggins family:

*My family and I wish to express my deepest condolences to the family after learning of the passing of your dear husband, Dr. William Wiggins. It is hard losing a father, brother or nephew. While I know that your love one will be greatly missed by you, other family members and friends, I trust that you all will reflect on the many precious moments you spent together over the years, especially the last memorable Holiday Season.*

*You must rejoice in the fact that your dear husband, father, brother and nephew, after meeting Jesus is now having his own reunion in heaven with all the family members whom preceded him into God's Glory. You can believe that they all are having a hallelujah good time.*

*Losing any family member is indeed a very heart breaking experience: nevertheless, you can be confident that your beloved husband, father and nephew have transitioned to a better place where there is no more sufferings. The Apostle Paul assures us that..."when we are absent from this body, our spiritual body is present with the Lord," 2nd. Cor. 5:8.*

*And we as believers know that God knows best and He is collecting His family members for that great family reunion in Heaven one day. Oh, what a great day of rejoicing that will be, when we all will see Jesus face to face.*

*May God continue to bless you all as you go through this very difficult period in your lives*

*Your sister in Christ Jesus,*

*Mary Smith-Forrest*

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**Mary Smith-Forrest** - December 31, 2016 at 11:14 AM



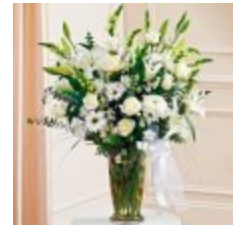
“ *Blue & White Sympathy Standing Spray was purchased for the family of William Hawthorne Wiggins Jr..*



December 30, 2016 at 05:06 PM



“ *White (Large) Sympathy Vase Arrangement was purchased for the family of William Hawthorne Wiggins Jr..*



December 29, 2016 at 04:29 PM



“ *June Ridley purchased the Dish Garden with Fresh Cut Flowers for the family of William Hawthorne Wiggins Jr..*



**June Ridley** - December 29, 2016 at 03:33 PM



“ *Springtime Wishes was purchased for the family of William Hawthorne Wiggins Jr..*



December 29, 2016 at 02:11 PM

Kristen  
Reese

“ *When I was a young, uncertain first generation college student trying to figure things out at IU, I was blessed beyond measure when Dr. Wiggins became my mentor. He was kind, warm and funny and helped me build my self-confidence. He always had a genuine interest in my becoming successful and had also lived in Louisville and understood my love for the Cards. Up until that point in my life, I'd never had any kind of a grandfather-like figure in my life and he was that for me in many ways. I'm so sorry to hear of his passing, but so blessed that I knew him and was mentored by him during such an important time in my life.*



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**Kristen Reese** - December 29, 2016 at 12:42 PM

PS

“ *Doc Wiggins was instrumental in my coming to Indiana University. He chaired the committee which interviewed me for the director of the FASE Mentoring Program position. Doc was a wonderful human being. I'll miss having those conversations around the IU football and basketball teams with him.*

*My condolences to the entire Wiggins family. Doc's memories will be cherished forever.*

*Patrick D. Smith*

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**Patrick D. Smith** - December 29, 2016 at 09:25 AM

HB

“ I knew Dr. Bill in a number of ways. He was a Rotarian and we often shared a table and conversation. My football seats were near his and Janice's, and he showed both his interest and loyalty to the team. In those and other contacts, I learned to know a man who loved his family, loved his professional assignments, loved IU, and loved food. Bill impacted anything with which he was associated, and positively, too.

*Harmon Baldwin*  
*Richmond, VA.*

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**Harmon Baldwin** - December 29, 2016 at 08:09 AM