



Brett Vonré Harrell Sr.

November 14, 1968 - August 2, 2023

Brett Vonré Harrell Sr. transitioned to glory on Wednesday, August 2, 2023. He was born on November 14, 1968 to the late John and Janita Harrell.

Brett grew up in Victory Gardens, now known as Cavalier Manor in Portsmouth, Virginia. He graduated from I. C. Norcom Highschool where he was member of the “Marching Greyhounds” Drum Line. He continued on to graduate from Norfolk State University with a Bachelor of Music with an emphasis in media. He was a member of the NSU Jazz Trio also known as “The Power Trio”. At NSU, Brett served as the section leader for the “Million Dollar Funk Squad” in “The Marching Spartan Legion”. He was also a member of the marching band fraternity Phi Mu Alpha.

Brett joined Mount Calvary Baptist Church at the age of 15 and continued to serve and worship there the remainder of his life. He served their Music Ministry as the Choir Director, Keyboardist, and most currently the Bass Player.

Brett’s phenomenal professional career began in the public school system. He was the music teacher at Sheep Harney Elementary School, served as the Bass player for the Heritage Highschool Flashback R&B shows, and as the Band Director for Sussex County Highschool.

Brett was known and loved throughout the entertainment industry as “Bam Bam” Harrell. He was the drummer for the Boogie Band at Busch Gardens Amusement Park. But he was best known as a professional bassist. He performed with several bands including Kustom Made, Phenomenal Sounds, the Unifics, A Touch of Spice, As 1, the Champagne Band, and the Opium Band. He played for many well-known events such as the Hampton Jazz Festival and the Ebony Fashion Fair Showcase. His talents allowed him to share the stage with many entertainers such as The Gap Band, Glen Jones, Charlie Wilson, and Gregory Porter.

Brett was predeceased by his brother Reginald Harrell, sister Brenda Myers, and nephew Tarrell Harrell. He is survived by his son Brett Vonré Harrell Jr., his two daughters Bria Janaé Marcelle Harrell and Jaia T’Keyah Johnson, as well as his brother Allen Harrell, sister JoAnn, Ward, and fiancé Christina C. Gardner.

Funeral Services are provided will be at Mount Calvary Baptist Church at 901 Thomas Circle, Portsmouth, VA on Friday, August 11, 2023 at 11:00 a.m. Special thanks to J T. Fisher Funeral Services for their support and service throughout this difficult time.

The family also extends special thanks to Brett’s caretakers:

- Pastor William S. Hampton and the church family of Mount Calvary Baptist Church
- Sentara Heart Hospital Cardiac Intensive Care Unit,
- the staff of Davita Greater Portsmouth,
- Sentara Leigh Hospital Wound Card Clinic,

- Rebecca Pugmire Nurse Practitioner,
- Stephen To, MD, as well as
- Deloris Pruett-Polite and the multitude of musicians that joined together to make this celebration of life possible.

Brett was loved by all and will be greatly missed by his nieces, nephews, and friends.

Previous Events

Service

AUG 11. 11:00 AM (ET)

Mount Calvary Baptist Church
901 Thomas Circle
Portsmouth, VA

Tribute Wall

DE

“ I don't know where to start... this young man worked my nerves back in the day 🤔🤔🤔because he was so hungry to be a great musician, I saw that in him and poured into him whenever I got the opportunity. He was always cordial, respectful & like most of my musician friends silly! It was always a joy to see him, and hear him play. These last 3 years have been very difficult for so many & saying farewell to my friend isn't easy, but, you left your thumbprint on everything you touched Bam & that's a part of you we can embrace until we meet again. Rest in paradise my friend, you did well!

Dell - January 05, 2024 at 08:59 PM

ME

“ My sincerist condolences to the Harrell family! His favorite quote was “Get Her!” while he grabbed a glove to hold his a access after treatment for his access after Dialysis! My Harbourview Dialysis patient, and Greater Portsmouth we will miss him & his nephew Terrell! - MEL CCHT-A DAVITA TECH FOR 7 years!!! #GREATER PORTSMOUTH

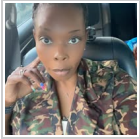
Mel - August 14, 2023 at 07:57 PM

AM

“ Bro. Brett, looking back it seems like forever where you were directing Mt. Calvary’s youth choir and our youngest daughter, and then as a musician, and lastly working with you as a part of the Audio/Visual ministry. Your craft was unmatched, and your breath of musical and sound engineering knowledge was shared unselfishly with us all. Thank you! While saddened in our flesh, we rejoice in our spirit having crossed paths with you here. Until ... Brother Brett!

Bro. Aaron and the Mann Family.

Aaron Mann - August 11, 2023 at 05:36 PM



“ Brett thank you so much for all the influence you had on my children during their time in the band and your time at Sussex. You were so appreciated!

Tawanna Scott - August 11, 2023 at 03:26 PM

TF

“ When I first met Bam, it was *The Unifics'* first rehearsal with him. He walked in with his hands in his pockets and his axe still in the case, looked at some sheet music that we would address in the rehearsal and said: "That sounds good".

To say the least, I was impressed, and from that day back in 2005 'til now, we, including all of the Unifics and musicians involved, developed a bond that was eternal. He was a World-Class Bassist and could play with anybody on earth and command their respect. It was a true pleasure, filled with much pride, to introduce Bam-Bam on stage as the Bass Player for our stage band, Backbone.

Bam also had much dedication to the church. He would always remind me on our Saturday night gigs, no matter where we were, that he had to be back in Virginia Sunday morning to play for his church.

I'm going to miss him forever. He was my friend and I have nothing but love and respect for him. Roll on, Bam, and do your thing. Al's gonna be glad you're with him again in his band "...up there", carrying the mail like you always did. I've met a lot of excellent bass players in my day, but non were better than then Brett Harrell.

Rest in Peace, my Brother.

Faunt
& the entire Unifics organization

Tom Fauntleroy - August 11, 2023 at 01:49 PM

KS

“ Our heart felt condolences go out to the family of Brett Harrell. Your kind demeanor and joy that you brought to the various choirs at Mount Calvary Baptist Church will never be forgotten. Your musical talents were definitely a gift from God that you enjoyed sharing with us all. We thank God for you, my brother.

The Morris and Terrell Family

Kimlonte F. Morris, Sr. - August 09, 2023 at 09:09 PM

EW

“ Evelyn Wertz lit a candle in memory of Brett Harrell



Evelyn Wertz - August 09, 2023 at 12:23 PM

MW

“ Words cannot express how deep my feelings of sorrow are for the Harrell Family at this time...BUT, God is yet faithful. Allow Him to comfort and keep you even in the midst of misunderstanding, for "His ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts," yet "everything works together for the good of those who are the called according to His purpose.”

The last year or so has been a bit much for you all (Reginald, Terrell and now Brett), but God is able "to do exceedingly above anything we can ask or think." So look to HIM for peace and understanding.

I first met Brett in kindergarten when he was a year behind me in pre-school. We brought him home from school daily and he kept us all laughing even back then. He was hilarious and so intelligent at a very young age. Needless to say, his intellect drove him to excel musically. I even remember his days performing with the various professional musicians as part of the entertainment at Busch Gardens for a few years. LOL Just effortlessly handling various instruments with precision and joy. He will be sorely missed.

To the Harrell Family and Loved Ones: Cherish the pleasant memories and allow laughter and joy to flow even in the midst of the tears.

Be blessed!

*Michael Williams and Family
(Lifelong friend)*

Michael Williams - August 08, 2023 at 05:01 PM

DP

“ Thank you Brett "Bam Bam" Harell for always just being an authentic Gentle GIANT! I will forever be grateful for you pouring into me and Phenomenal Sounds Band for 10 strong years. The smiles you brought to my face, and the tears you wiped away, the sound advice, and your electrifying talent will never be forgotten.

Take your rest my friend. I shall see you later.

*Love Always,
Dee Polite*



Delores Pruitt-Polite - August 05, 2023 at 12:50 PM