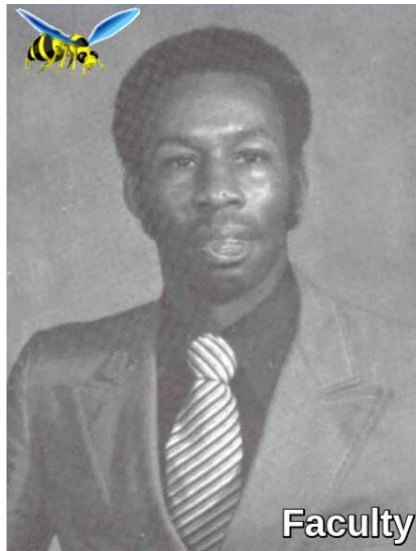


Staff – Robert Lewis Terrell.



Robert Terrell had a secret not too many folks knew about. For years, he would offer disadvantaged children a promise: Graduate from high school and I'll give you \$100.00.

"He would keep up with them all the way up to the 12th grade," said his daughter, Toya Hawkins. "I've had at least seven or eight people already call me and say they

feel like they lost their father, that he was the only father they knew."

Mr. Terrell spent more than 40 years in the city school system, staying for 16 years beyond the point he could have retired. After leaving his post as principal at Cummings Elementary, he worked as a substitute principal at other schools following his 2006 retirement. "He's what you call a rare gem, a person who is your ideal person you want as a teacher. And he'd be the ideal person you want as principal," said Clark White, the school system's director of pupil services and a friend of Mr. Terrell's for more than 40 years.

There was a simple reason for Mr. Terrell's devotion to education, his family said. "My daddy loved those children," Hawkins said. Added his wife, Katherine: "I think he would've done that even without pay."

Mr. Terrell was also an avid sports fan, having played baseball, basketball and football in high school while also running track. During his teaching career, he also coached each of those sports.

“The Memphis Tigers and the Grizzlies,” Hawkins said, “He’s a season ticket holder to the Grizzlies, and he attended every game. That Monday when he passed is probably the first game he’s missed.”

On April 27, 1990, Mr. Terrell was shot several times while jogging on the track at Corry Junior High School. He spent several weeks in the hospital and had to use a walker and crutches for a while after that. His assailant escaped before being later caught. “The guy said he’d been drinking and he was mad at the world,” Katherine said.

The injuries didn’t keep Mr. Terrell away from his children at Cummings very long. “He went back to work with that walker,” his wife said.