



Obituary

Michael Alphonso Clarke

October 5, 1941 – July 19, 2022

Pardon Me for Not Getting Up by Kelly Roper

*Oh dear, if you're reading this right now,
I must have given up the ghost.
I hope you can forgive me for being
Such a stiff and unwelcoming host.
Just talk amongst yourself my friends,
And share a toast or two.*

*For I am sure you will remember well
How I loved to drink with you.
Don't worry about mourning me,
I was never easy to offend.
Feel free to share a story at my expense
And we'll have a good laugh at the end.*

Pop was a private and humble man of many talents and skills. Always willing to lend an ear, and lend a hand. But he'd never lend his tools. If you were foolish enough to lend him one of yours, you'd never see it again. You'd have to steal it back. Somehow, it always ended up back in his possession. Sure, you'd be upset seeing it in his tool bag. But you'd know it would be in good hands, and put to good use.

He would use his tools to fix up cars on weekends. Regardless of the weather, or time of day, he was under the hood of a car. I often watched and listened. I learn some of the most interesting curse words. Most of which aren't appropriate to say here. But always wondered; What exactly is an "assbert" anyways? If anyone knows, please see me later.

We bonded over cars, and he instilled in me, a life-long love and passion for automobiles. At two years old, I used to sit on his lap and shift gears for him. AT TWO! Today, they make children use a child seat until 8 years old! And there I was, two years old, shifting gears for my Pop. Thank God it was the 70s!

If you asked him if he loved driving, he'd say he hated it. But he did it with such enthusiasm, fury, and skill, you know he wasn't being entirely honest. He loved driving, he just hated sharing the road with other drivers. He'd always yell "Where did you get your license? Out of a Cracker Jack box?! (Gumball machine?)"

He kept his cars in meticulous condition. Always mechanically sound, and always clean. If you got into his car, you knew the rules: Don't touch his glass, don't touch, or put anything on his dash, or paint. Most important, respect his car. Always respect the car. Why was he so particular about his car? He used to say that the car he had was what he could afford at the time, so he kept it clean. This had a profound effect on me, and my friends, and I have the same rules with my car.

Pop was always there to help you. If something was broken, Pop would fix it. If you needed a ride somewhere, Pop would take you. He may give you crap for it at first, but he was always there when you needed him. He also gave great advice, even when it was unwarranted and unsolicited.

And, he never complained. You'd never see the pain he felt when he lost his mother, Marjorie, his Aunt Crystal, his only daughter, Janel, and his second wife, congregant, Sister Susie Bassfield-Clarke. He'd never let you know if he wasn't doing well, or feeling well. Even while he was battling cancer, he was always there with a drink, a smile, and some bad jokes.

As a man, a friend, and a father, he was like his tools; stolen.

However, unlike tools, we cannot get him back. Sure, we're upset that he's no longer with us. But you know he's in God's hands, and the Lord will put him to good use.