

June 18, 2009

Dear Aeolians:

Please accept my heartfelt thanks for your stellar singing in Atlanta. You're the best! I greatly appreciate the sacrifices you made to be present and to honor Ma in such a spectacular way. Brenda and her family were deeply moved by your outpouring of love.

Thanks also for allowing me to rant during rehearsal. Please know that it's NEVER personal. Ma's musical legacy to us is one of excellence and I will always demand no less from you than she did. I look forward to working with you again in a couple of years.

Several months ago I discussed the idea of a tribute with Brenda. She asked that she be kept in the loop as plans developed. I'd like you to know who helped me behind the scenes. From the beginning, Lori Bryan assisted me in the planning process. She made numerous phone calls to our participants, composed letters, scanned music, talked with the caterers and helped shape the program into what would have been a beautiful tribute. She kept me on track every step of the way. Thanks Lori!

When we realized that the original date – July 4 – needed to change due to Ma's rapidly declining health, we reached out to Steve Richardson to join in the planning. Thanks Steve for sharing your wise counsel, great ideas, writing skills, and spiritual leadership.

Our plans would have been pointless if they had not been made known to you. Therefore, I'd like to say thanks to our contacts person, Jenal Gatlin. It's no small task compiling a database of addresses for all of Alma's Aeolians, but Jenal managed to get our notices out to as many of you as possible. The result of her work was evident by the large number who attended our reunion. Please help by keeping us informed if your current information changes. Thanks Jenal!

Kirk Thompson, who was unable to be with us, posted our music online and also made notices available on Facebook. Gone are the days of sending music by "snail mail". Thanks Kirk!

Garrett Caldwell was instrumental in obtaining video messages from invitees who could not attend. Unfortunately, when the tribute became a memorial we no longer needed the video messages. Thanks Garrett!

Pam Foster Bishop served as our stage manager and did a fine job. Thanks Pam!

Emile Parker serves as Berean's hospitality director and he helped to ensure our comfort during dinner after church. Had Ma's tribute been carried out as planned he was also to be our timekeeper.

For contractual reasons, Merv was unable to be with us and deeply regrets not being present. My duties in connection with Ma's funeral were varied (planning, playing, conducting, etc.). I was swamped! At the last minute, Ricky Little and Desmond Pierre-Louis kindly consented to assist me with the conducting. What a fantastic job they did! Ma would have been so pleased. Thanks guys!

Again I say thanks to each of you for helping to make this event extra special. Take care until next time.

Warmest regards,

Luther Washington II

#### **FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

James Arthur Williams, the choir director for twenty-five years at Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, worked closely with Alma and the Bradfords from Alabama A & M in planning the annual Black choral festivals. He attended Ma's funeral in Atlanta and thought the music was fantastic. Dr.

Caldwell, the choral director from Central States University in Ohio and a student of James Arthur Williams, was also in attendance.

Within the last year, the Adventist church has lost several giants in choral music. A few notable ones include:

- Dr. Harold Anthony, choral director at Pine Forge Academy and later the Oakwood College Music Department Chairman. He hired Alma to lead the Aeolians which was a dormant group at the time.
- Mr. David L. Green, choral/band director at Northeastern Academy, Pine Forge Academy, and Greater Atlanta Adventist Academy.
- Joni Mae Pierre-Louis (mother of Aeolians – Desmond and Janine), director of the Aeolians in the 1960's. She conducted students such as Gwen Winston Foster, David Green, Jacqueline Ross, and Lorraine Miles.

Please pray for our own Arnold Grace and Melcher Monk as they deal with health challenges. Please also remember former Aeolians conductor Lloyd Mallory in prayer. Both of his parents are gravely ill.

Ma's handwritten copy of "*I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say*" has been posted on our Aeolian web page for those who wish to have it as a keepsake. Several of you asked for it in Atlanta.

[www.aeolionalumni.org](http://www.aeolionalumni.org)