

VETERAN OTIS HARRIS, affectionately known as “OT”, was born in Sumter County, Georgia on February 17, 1942, to the parentage of the late Mr. Joseph Harris and the late Mrs. Lizzie Wallace Harris. He was the second of nine children with one sister, Mrs. Juanita Harris Jones, preceding him in death. Upon the death of his parents, Otis became the patriarch of the family, helping siblings, nieces and nephews whenever possible.

### **“A Legacy of Education”**

He received his education in the public schools of Sumter County. OT left school before graduating to help support his family by working on the farm with his father and others. However, understanding the importance of education, he then attended and graduated from South Georgia Technical College as a master Cabinet Maker. He later completed his education by receiving his GED which he was very proud of.

### **“A Legacy of Service to His Country”**

VETERAN OTIS HARRIS enlisted in the United States Army in 1966 and was deployed to Germany. He was honorably discharged in 1970. During his time in the military, he served in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 77<sup>th</sup> Artillery where he received the National Defense Service Medal and Marksman Rifle designation. In addition to being a trained marksman, he also worked in transportation logistics in the U.S. Army.

### **“A Legacy of Hard Work”**

Early in his adult life, Otis demonstrated an exemplary work ethic and sense of responsibility. He was an accomplished auto mechanic, cabinet maker, gardener, barber and an all-around handyman. Otis would often help community members in need of repairs: vehicles, lawn mowers, washing machines, lamps, and small appliances— frequently refusing to accept payment for his services. Many believed there was nothing he couldn’t fix. He was the community barber, cutting hair without charge or for just 25 cents back in the 60s and 70s. His entrepreneurial spirit was displayed as he operated his community automotive shop with his brothers repairing cars for people all around Americus and the community.

OT was also a gardening enthusiast who reaped a bountiful harvest of fruits and vegetables every year which he eagerly shared with others: Collard Greens, Tomatoes, Okra, Green Beans, Sugar Cane, Corn, etc. Having such a kind spirit and a giving heart, he would actually give most of the produce he planted away to others. He was always helping others.

He was employed by the Marlette Mobile Home factory where he was a cabinet maker. Later, he was employed by the Davidson Textron Rubber Company where he was a dedicated team player, leader and mentor to others for many years up until his retirement.

### **“A Legacy of Service to His Church”**

At an early age, Otis joined the Welcome Baptist Church where he remained a faithful and dependable member until his health began to fail. He didn’t just attend church, he was an active member bringing his family along with him. They worked around, in and on the church. He sang and traveled with the choir. He was also a church trustee and served on the church’s Finance Committee. He rarely missed Sunday Church, Sunday School, Bible Study, church events, special worship services, or choir practice. He supported his beloved Welcome Baptist Church spiritually, financially and materially with a very giving spirit.

### **“A Legacy of Community Service”**

Otis was well-known and liked in the community. He always greeted others with a smile. Every year during Vacation Bible School, Otis, his wife and members of his family often played the role of “meals on wheels”

as they delivered food for the hungry children who eagerly looked forward to their daily snacks before heading home. While the Welcome Baptist Church was providing food for the community through its monthly food pantry, Otis was always there doing whatever needed to be done. The bible says that “Faith without works is dead” and Otis’s faith was very much alive in his service to the Lord and to his community.

### **“A Legacy of Family and Friends”**

Otis was a very devoted family man. He was married to the love of his life, the former Ethel Mae Gibson, for over 54 years. To this union, three children were born. He loved his wife as Christ loved the church and he made every effort to train his children in the way that they should go. In typical Harris fashion, Otis was a hard worker who always provided for his family. His love of family extended beyond the walls of his home as he was a great son, brother, uncle, nephew, cousin and friend.

Left to cherish his memory are two sons: Mr. Darrion Harris, Leslie, GA and Mr. Michael (Tyeesia) Harris, Americus, GA; a daughter, Ms. Kassie Harris, Americus, GA; his sisters: Ms. Ella Harris, Leslie, GA; Ms. Bernice Harris, Conyers, GA; Ms. Betty Harris, Carrollton, GA; Ms. Constance Hollis, Americus, GA and Ms. Lillie Ann Evans, Marietta, GA; his brothers: Mr. Joseph Harris, Kathleen, GA; Mr. Charles (Archie) Harris, Americus, GA and stepbrother, Mr. Benjamin Ison, Douglasville, GA; four grandchildren: Candace (Demetrius) Jenkins, Americus, GA; Kylon Harris, Americus, GA; Michael Harris, Jr., Murfreesboro, TN and Lauren Harris, Americus, GA; two great grandchildren, Olivia Harris and Jace Jenkins of Americus, GA; his sisters and brothers-in-law: Mrs. Abell (Arthur) Lockhart, New Jersey; Mrs. Lucille (Vernon) Wright, St. Albany, NY; Mr. Bobbie (Verna) Gibson, Bloomfield, CT; Ms. Vivian Gibson, Ms. Thelma Gibson of Leslie, GA; Mr. Arthur (Cassandra) Gibson, Ms. Carolyn Gibson, Mrs. Janice (William) Wallace, all of Americus, GA and Ms. Katherine Holder, St. Thomas Virgin Islands; and a host of nieces, nephews, cousins, other relatives and friends also survive.

### **“A Legacy Everlasting”**

Otis was known for his kind heart, gentle spirit and big smile. He didn’t need or want the spotlight, but his good deeds were like a light on a hill that couldn’t be hidden. In the true spirit of his parents, Joe and Lizzie Harris, he treated everyone with respect and embraced strangers as if he was entertaining angels. If a song could capture the essence of OT, “You’ve Got a Friend” would be a good candidate because if you needed him—winter, spring, summer or fall— all you had to do was call and he would be there. He was a true and loving friend and a true servant of the most high God.

***OT was a Godly man who did not grow weary in his well doing!***