

# VIA Heritage Association (VIAHA) Hall of Fame

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## 2018 VIAHA Hall of Fame Class Chosen

*Third HOF Class features 12 Inductees*

**CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA** — Twelve individuals who have made outstanding contributions through high school, college and professional careers have been selected to the 2018 class of the Virginia Interscholastic Association Heritage Association (VIAHA) Hall of Fame.

The class features five athletes (Ronald Bolton – Peabody HS, Petersburg; Joseph Bradley – Carter G. Woodson HS, Hopewell; Earl Faison – Huntington HS, Newport News; Jim Lewis – Parker-Gray HS, Alexandria; and Jerry Venable – Booker T. Washington HS, Staunton); four coaches (Alphonso Hamilton – Booker T. Washington HS, Staunton; Eugene Thompson – Carver HS, Newport News; Arnold Thurmond – Parker-Gray HS, Alexandria; and Willie Travis – Carver HS, Newport News) and three contributors (William Bailey – Mary N. Smith HS, Accomack County; Julian Earls – Crestwood HS, Chesapeake; and Marguerita Ragsdale – Southside HS, Dinwiddie County). Members of the Class of 2018 will bring total membership to 50. The third annual Hall of Fame induction dinner will be held on Friday, June 29, 2018 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Charlottesville, VA.

The Hall is dedicated to preserving the rich heritage and legacy of African-American students and adults who participated in the Virginia Interscholastic Association from 1954-70 and its predecessor organization the Virginia Interscholastic Athletic League (VIAL).

Prior to public school desegregation, one of the most influential organizations in Virginia was the Virginia Interscholastic Association (VIA), which served young African-American students who attended segregated high schools in the state. The impact this association had on shaping the lives of these students went far beyond governing athletic events. The VIA brought together students, parents and mentors to develop a strong foundation of character and ethical responsibility in the students. The notable careers of many VIA graduates are testaments to the successful efforts of their teachers, principals and counselors.

Athletes and coaches considered for nomination are those who excelled on VIA athletic teams. Contributors are professionals who may have excelled in VIA non-athletic activities or in such areas as school administration, media, officiating, medical services and other professions. A fourth group is best described as the Legacy category. This includes such potential nominees as VIA athletic teams that gained extraordinary distinction or coaches, athletes, contributors and/or teams from VIAL or post-VIA era history.

The VIAL/VIA's original home was at Virginia State College (now Virginia State University) from 1954–1970. After merging with the Virginia High School League (VHSL), all VIA records are now stored at Virginia State University.

The deadline for submitting nominations in 2018 is September 30.

## About the VIA Heritage Association Hall of Fame

The VIA Heritage Association Hall of Fame (VIAHA) is organized as a means of recognizing and preserving the rich heritage and legacy of African-American (Black) high school sports and activities under the direction of the VIA from 1954-70 and promoting greater appreciation and understanding of the contributions of Blacks to the history of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

### VIA Heritage Association (VIAHA) Hall of Fame 2018 Inductees

#### Athletes

##### **Ronald Bolton**

**Peabody High, Petersburg (1968)**

**Football**

Sheer determination was the key to the accomplishment of Ron Bolton's childhood dream to be a professional football player. An undersized player who was initially cut by his Peabody High coach, Ron was allowed to practice with the team and dress for games. By his junior year, he was a starter at wide receiver and defensive back. After graduation, he enrolled at Norfolk State University. As a walk on defensive back he did not play as a freshman but was a starting cornerback his final three years. He was selected as an All-American defensive back by the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the top black college all American team of the time. *The Sporting News* rated him among the nation's top defensive back prospects. Drafted by the New England Patriots in 1972, he played professional football for 11 seasons – four with the Patriots (1972-75) and seven with the Cleveland Browns (1976-82). He completed his career with 35 interceptions, including a career best seven in 1974. After 14 years as an entrepreneur, he began his coaching career as defensive backs coach at Liberty University in 1996. He has subsequently coached at Norfolk State, Delaware State and Howard University.

##### **Joseph Bradley**

**Carter G. Woodson High, Hopewell (1957)**

**Basketball**

Carter G. Woodson High was a basketball power in the mid to late 1950s. Joseph Bradley was a key player on teams which won consecutive VIA Group III State Championships from 1954 to 1959. Competing in the VIA's small school division, Woodson regularly scheduled games with the larger Group I and II schools in order to compete with the best teams in the state. Coach Robinette "Pro" Hayes regularly played and defeated teams from Peabody of Petersburg, Armstrong and Maggie Walker of Richmond, St Emma's Military Academy of Powhatan, Carver of Chesterfield and Virginia Randolph of Henrico. As an outstanding player on offense and defense, Bradley was selected to VIA Group III all district and all tournament teams three times each and was twice a VIA Group III All-State player. In 1955 he scored 42 points in the state championship game against St. Clare Walker High. As a student leader on and off the basketball court, he was twice selected as team captain.

##### **Earl Faison**

**Huntington High, Newport News (1957)**

**Football**

Earl Faison attended Carver High for one year before transferring to Huntington where he excelled in football, basketball and track. Coached by hall of famer Thad Madden, he played on VIA State Football Championship teams in 1955 and 1957. He was also an all-state basketball player. His outstanding skills with the shot put and discus contributed to state championships in track and field. As a 6 foot 5 inch, 265 pound lineman who played

both offense and defense, he was named All-Big-10 and an honorable mention All-American in 1960 at Indiana University. After graduation Faison signed with the Los Angeles Charges of the American Football League (AFL) as a first round draft pick. With defensive tackle Ernie Ladd, Faison helped form the original "Fearsome Foursome" defensive line in pro football. Selected as AFL Rookie of the Year and All-AFL in 1961, he was an AFL all-star five times and played on the 1963 league championship team. After his pro football career ended in 1966, Mr. Faison spent nearly 40 years as an educator. Beginning as a teacher at San Diego's Lincoln High School in 1968, he served as the football coach from 1970-75. His most outstanding player was future NFL Hall of Famer Marcus Allen. He has been selected to the Charges Hall of Fame, the team's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Team and was inducted into the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame in 1989.

### **Jim Lewis**

#### **Parker-Gray/Groveton High, Alexandria (1964)**

##### **Basketball**

Before a 45-year coaching career, Jim Lewis was an All-state basketball player on Parker-Gray's 1963 VIA Group II State runner-up. In 1964 he transferred to Fairfax County's newly integrated Groveton High and was selected as a *Washington Post* All-Met player. Upon graduation in 1964 he was the first African-American to receive a basketball scholarship at West Virginia University. He played on a Southern Conference Championship Team in 1967 and graduated with a degree in journalism in 1968. He began his coaching career as an assistant coach with men's programs at Tennessee State (1969) and Gannon College (1970). In 1971 he was hired as the first African-American assistant basketball coach at Duke University. He has coached at two high schools, eight colleges or universities and four Women's Basketball Association (WNBA) teams. He had 20 years as a collegiate head coach in women's basketball. At George Mason University, he coached for 14 seasons (1984-1997) and won more games than any other coach compiling a record of 201-177. He was head coach at Fordham University from 2001-2006. He was the first head coach of the WNBA's Washington Mystics (1997-1998). He has been a television analyst for games broadcast by ESPN and Home Team Sports. He was appointed to the 1996 USA Basketball Committee to select the Women's Olympic Team for that year.

### **Jerry Venable**

#### **Booker T. Washington High, Staunton (1966)**

##### **Basketball**

Jerry Venable completed his high school basketball career with the highest scoring single game (61 points) and the highest scoring average per season. He led his team to a third place finish in the 1966 VIA Group II State Championships. That year he was among the first two African-American basketball players selected to the Virginia Sportswriters and Sportscasters All-State Team. After high school, he attended Ferrum College where he was a Junior College All-American in 1968. He was the leading scorer in his two seasons at Kansas State University, averaging 15.5 points and 7.9 rebounds per game. He was one of three players in Kansas State history to score 30 points and collect 20 rebounds in a single game. As team captain in 1970, he led Kansas State to the regular season championship and was an All-Big Eight Conference selection. After having been drafted by the Philadelphia 76ers and the Dallas Cowboys, he continued his basketball career for many years as a world traveler and goodwill ambassador with the Harlem Globetrotters. Mr. Venable now lives in the Staunton, VA area where he leads a community-based nonprofit organization called "Learning Opportunities Through Sports." This organization helps school aged children through the promotion of sports and educational activities.

## Coaches

### **Alphonso Hamilton**

#### **Booker T. Washington, Staunton**

Coach Hamilton was born in Shamrock, Florida and graduated from Pamlico County High School in Bayboro, NC in 1948. After a tour in the U. S Army (1951-53), he received his B.S. degree in biology from Shaw University, Raleigh, NC, in 1956. That same year he began his coaching career as basketball coach at Booker T. Washington High. In 11 years as head coach he compiled a record of 174-57, winning eight straight district Championships and back to back VIA Group II State Championships in 1961 and 1962. They finished in third place in the 1966 state tournament. With the integration of the public schools in the late 1960s he became head basketball coach at Robert E. Lee High in Staunton and won the Virginia High School League State Championship in 1967. He served as assistant principal at Lee High from 1967 to 1989. He is now the Pastor of the First Church of God In Christ, Staunton, Va.

### **Eugene Thompson**

#### **Carver High, Newport News**

As a high school athlete, Eugene Thompson played football, baseball and track and field. After a tour of duty in the U. S. Army he attended Compton Junior College, in Compton, CA and graduated from Elizabeth City State University (ECSU) in 1966. At ECSU he played football and tennis. He began coaching as Head Basketball Coach at Southwestern High in Windsor, NC in 1966. In 1970 he began coaching in Delaware Public Schools. He led Wilmington High to State Basketball Championships in 1978, 1983 and 1988. His overall record in basketball was 489-227. As head track and field coach his team was State Champion in 1995. He coached his first varsity tennis team in 1974 while serving as head coach of basketball and track and field. He was named Delaware Coach of the Year in Basketball (1978), Tennis (1978) and Track and Field (1995). He raised funds to help start the Wilmington Tennis Foundation with a goal of raising the level of minority participation. He coached men's and women's tennis teams at Lincoln University before he became head men's tennis coach at Virginia State University in 2005. He was CIAA Tennis Coach of the Year in 2012. He was selected to the Delaware Afro-American Hall of Fame (2009); the Delaware Interscholastic Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame (2013) and the Delaware Tennis Hall of Fame (2013).

### **Arnold Thurmond**

#### **Parker-Gray High, Alexandria**

As head basketball coach at Parker-Gray High School from 1952-1965 Arnold Thurmond compiled a record of 214-87. His teams won four consecutive VIA Group II State Championships 1957-1960. In 1956 and 1957 his teams won 39 consecutive games. The 1957 team played in the National Negro High School Tournament at Tennessee A&I College in Nashville, Tennessee. His 1963 team was VIA Group II state runner-up. In addition to VIA competition, Coach Thurmond's teams played many of the top teams in Washington, D.C. and suburban Maryland. A graduate of Hampton Institute (now University) Mr. Thurmond was also an assistant football coach. As teacher, mentor, role model and father figure, he impacted the lives of many students he did not coach. His commitment to building strong character and awareness of fair play was always evident in his players. He guided his students to be team leaders, team builders and good citizens. He retired from the Alexandria City Public School System after serving as a teacher, coach, guidance counselor, assistant principal, resource center director and adult education counselor. For his service to the youth of the city, the Alexandria City Council formally recognized him with an Official Proclamation on May 1, 2002.

## **Willie Travis**

### **Carver High, Newport News**

This 1947 graduate of Huntington High coached 31 years and compiled more than 350 wins at three high schools. Playing for legendary Coach Thad Madden, Travis played on Huntington's VIA Group I Basketball State Championship team in 1945. As a senior quarterback he led his football team to an undefeated season. He is a 1951 graduate of North Carolina Central University where he played for hall of fame Coach John McClendon. He began his coaching career in 1951 at Ellerbe High in Richmond County, NC before moving to Carver High in 1953. His 1955 team finished third in the VIA State Tournament and was the only team to defeat state champion Booker T. Washington of Suffolk. His 1965 team lost was VIA state championship runner-up. In 18 years at Carver he also served as assistant football coach and head baseball coach. With the closure of Carver in 1971, he became head coach at Denbigh High in Newport News. Among his players were all around athlete Leroy Keys and NFL player Tommy Reamon. As coach and physical education teacher, his students remember him for his ability to instill a strong sense of teamwork and fair play in all situations. Coach Travis retired in 1982.

## **Contributors**

### **William Bailey**

#### **Mary N. Smith High, Accomack County (1958)**

##### **Aviation**

This aviation pioneer was an honor student who graduated third in the class of 1958 at Mary N. Smith High. A Reserve Officer Training Corps graduate of Virginia State University (VSU), he entered the U. S. Army as a second lieutenant in 1962. At a time when few African Americans were army pilots he expressed a desire to attend flight school. After his third rejection as an applicant, he was told that he lacked the "mental dexterity" to be a pilot. He later completed both fixed and rotary wing officer aviation flight training. During his first tour in Vietnam he flew UH-1 Huey Helicopters and was assigned as personal pilot for General William Westmorland, Commander of all U.S. Forces in Vietnam. During his military career he received two Distinguished Service Crosses, three Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts. Retiring from the army in 1983, Colonel Bailey went to work for Continental Airways where he was asked to help recruit minority and women pilots. Today he is recognized for training more than 1,000 pilots, including about 200 African-Americans. He continues to mentor students through programs supported by the Organization of Black Airline Pilots. He has been a major fund raiser for the former St. Paul's College in Lawrenceville, VA and established the Bailey Family Endowment at VSU. He has been selected to the VSU Sports Hall of Fame, the VSU ROTC Hall of Fame and the Virginia Aviation Hall of Fame.

### **Julian Earls**

#### **Crestwood High, Chesapeake (1960)**

##### **Science and Technology**

Dr. Earls is a 1960 Graduate of Crestwood High in Chesapeake, Va. He graduated from Norfolk State College (now University) in 1964 with a B. S. in Physics; University of Rochester in 1965 with a M.S. in Radiation Biology, and the University of Michigan in 1973 with a Ph.D. in Radiation Physics. He also received an M.S. in Management Development from the Harvard Business School. He began his career with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in 1965. In October 2003, Dr. Earls was appointed Director of NASA's Glenn Research Center (GRC) at Lewis Field in Cleveland, Ohio. As Director his responsibilities included research in technology and systems development for space programs. In this position, he managed a budget of \$740 million and more than 3,000 personnel. In one year he awarded over \$180 million in contracts to Historically Black Colleges and

Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges, and Hispanic Serving Institutions. Dr. Earls is co-founder of the Development Fund for Black Students in Science and Technology which awards scholarships to students who attend HBCUs. In tribute to his wife, he established the Zenobia N. Earls Scholarship, which is presented to students who attend Howard University and Norfolk State University. Among his many awards, he was presented the Golden Torch Award by the National Society of Black Engineers and the Man of Achievement Award by 100 Black Men.

### **Marguerita Ragsdale**

**Southside High, Dinwiddie County (1966)**

**Diplomat**

Dr. Ragsdale is a 1966 honors graduate of Southside High School in Dinwiddie County. She holds a B.A. degree in journalism from the American University, an M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in foreign affairs from the University of Virginia and a J.D. degree from Columbia University. A Middle East specialist and fluent in French and Arabic, Ambassador Ragsdale began her Foreign Service career in 1984. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of African Affairs selected her to head its Political Section at the U.S. Embassy in Pretoria, South Africa in 1999. In 2003, she was nominated to be Ambassador to the Republic of Djibouti by President George W. Bush and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. In 2007 she led the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Disarmament Commission and in 2009, served as Deputy Head of the U.S. delegation to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty Preparatory Committee meeting in New York. Ambassador Ragsdale retired in 2013 and is now working on a memoir of her 30-year career. In retirement, she supports two professional ballet companies in the Washington D.C. area and collects American antiques. In 2006 the Town of McKenney, in Dinwiddie County, VA, celebrated her accomplishments by naming "Marguerita D. Ragsdale Street."

#### **2017 Inductees into the VIAHA Hall of Fame were:**

**Athletes** – Mattie Parham Bell, Leroy Keyes, Milbert Arthur Megginson, Marty Miller and Charles Price.

**Coaches** – Howard Allen, Walter Lovett and Harry Waters.

**Contributors** – Garwin DeBerry, Clarence Oliver and Knox W. Tull, Jr.

#### **2016 Inductees into the VIAHA Hall of Fame were:**

**Athletes** – Walter Bowser, Roosevelt Brown, Joseph Buggs, Jesse Jefferson, Jr., Louvenia Johnson, Earl Lloyd, Raymond Pollard, Benita Fitzgerald Moseley, Bryant Stith, Charles Stukes and Donald Ross.

**Coaches** – Fredrick Cooper, Arthur Gardner, Robinette Hayes, George Lancaster, William Lawson, Jr., Thad Madden, Carl Pinn, George Quarles, Maxie Robinson and Robert Smith.

**Contributors** – James Hayes, Calvin Jacox, Clarence Jones, George Peterson, Elmer Sampson and Earnest Shaw.

**Special Recognition** – The Armstrong-Walker Football Classic.