

VIA Heritage Association (VIAHA) Hall of Fame

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 15 , 2019

Contacts:

Jimmy Hollins, Chairman, VIAHA
434-825-6117/burleyvarsityclub@gmail.com

Bernard R. Anderson, Recording Secretary
703-851-2989/banderson361@verizon.net

2019 VIAHA Hall of Fame Class Chosen

Fourth 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 2019 class of the Virginia Interscholastic Association Heritage Association (VIAHA) Hall of Fame.

The class features six athletes (Charles Bonaparte – Armstrong HS, Richmond; Benjamin “Benny” Brown – Carter G. Woodson HS, Hopewell; Warren Canada – Dunbar HS, Lynchburg; Robert “Bobby” Dandridge – Maggie L. Walker HS, Richmond; Fred Harold “Doc” Sawyer – Booker T. Washington HS, Norfolk; and Louis Richard Harris – Parker-Gray HS, Alexandria); three coaches (William Bailey – Booker T. Washington HS, Suffolk; James “Blue” Earley – Phenix HS, Hampton; and Carl Peal, Peabody/Petersburg HS, Petersburg) and three contributors (William Albert “W. A.” Brown, Principal, Carver HS, Chesterfield County; Cheryl Anthony Epps – Southside HS, Dinwiddie County; and Roger Gregory – Peabody/Petersburg HS, Petersburg). Members of the Class of 2019 will bring total membership to 62. The fourth annual Hall of Fame Banquet will be held at 5:00 p.m. on Friday, June 28, 2019 at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Charlottesville, VA.

The Hall is dedicated to recognizing and 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). Therefore, promoting greater appreciation and understanding of the contributions of Blacks to the history of the Commonwealth of Virginia is a primary objective.

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 2019 is September 30.

VIA Heritage Association (VIAHA) Hall of Fame

2019 Inductees

Athletes

Charles Bonaparte

Armstrong High, Richmond (1965)

Basketball

Charles Bonaparte was a high achieving academic student who participated in a full range of school activities and was one of the best high school basketball players in Virginia. His Armstrong High team won the 1964 VIA Group I State Basketball Championship. This team subsequently played in the National Black High School Tournament in Nashville, TN. Bonaparte was selected to the all-tournament team as Armstrong lost the national championship game to Parker High (Alabama) by a score of 81-79. After being recruited by several Division I basketball schools, he chose to play at Norfolk State University (NSU). Playing with former Richmond high school rival Bobby Dandridge, Bonaparte was a part of Coach Ernie Fears' high scoring teams that compiled a record of 88-16 from 1965-1969, including the 1968 Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) Basketball Championship. He still holds the single game scoring record for the post-season Portsmouth Invitational Tournament with 59 points in 1969. *The Virginian Pilot* said in 1996 that "the greatest one-two punch in Hampton Roads basketball history was that of Charles Bonaparte and Bob Dandridge of Norfolk State." After college, Mr. Bonaparte returned to Armstrong High as a teacher and basketball coach. He was recognized as a highly respected mentor, counselor and community leader. He passed away in 1996 and was posthumously elected to the NSU Athletics Hall of Fame in 2011 and the Richmond Public Schools Athletic Hall of Fame in 2015.

Benjamin "Benny" Brown

Carter G. Woodson High, Hopewell (1956)

Basketball

Benny Brown was a VIA Group III All State point guard on Carter G. Woodson's 1955 and 1956 State Championship Basketball teams. As a three-year starter, he was team captain in his junior and senior years and averaged 17 points per game for his high school career. His leadership was demonstrated by the fact that Group III Woodson lost only one game over two seasons; defeated only by Group I Peabody High of Petersburg. He was called an ideal point guard who was able to penetrate and score at the basket, pass the ball to open teammates or pull up for jump shots himself. In fact, he was considered an innovator of the jump shot in an era when the two-handed set shot was used by most players. His consistent, controlled play at all times was the embodiment of a "coach on the floor." He was considered a model student in the classroom. He participated in Student Government, the Acapella Choir, and Math and Science Clubs, and other activities. After graduating from Carter G. Woodson High, Brown played basketball at Virginia State College (now University) for two seasons before joining the U. S. Army. He played several years with the semi-professional Hopewell Vikings basketball team. He was elected to the Hopewell Athletic Wall of Fame in 2017.

Warren Canada

Dunbar High, Lynchburg (1963)

Basketball

Warren Canada was an all-around athlete who participated in football, basketball and track and field. He was team captain in football and basketball. He was selected as an All VIA Group I Western District basketball player four years and was most valuable player in the district tournament three times. At six feet, three inches tall, his skills around the basket as rebounder and scorer earned him the nickname "miniature Wilt (Chamberlain)." He set the all-time Dunbar High single game scoring record at 46 points; in the same game he collected 21 rebounds and

blocked seven shots. On another occasion, he had a two game total of 54 points and 49 rebounds. After graduating from Dunbar, he attended Norfolk State University and played alongside Bob Dandridge. Mr. Canada worked with at risk juveniles at the Lynchburg Detention Center for more than 30 years. His work with youths was a reflection of the positive attitude and coachability he possessed as an outstanding athlete at Dunbar High.

Robert “Bobby” Dandridge

Maggie L. Walker High, Richmond (1965)

Basketball

Robert “Bobby” Dandridge is among Virginia’s all-time great basketball players. He developed his skills under legendary coach Arthur “Stretch” Gardner at VIA Group I Maggie L. Walker High School. He attended Norfolk State University where he was selected as an All-CIAA player from 1967 to 1969 and was CIAA Tournament Most Valuable Player in 1968. In his senior year, he scored 32.9 points per game on the nation’s highest scoring team, which averaged 110 points per game. As a fourth round draft pick of the NBA’s Milwaukee Bucks, he was selected to the league’s All-Rookie Team in 1970. He was a key player on NBA World Championship Teams with the Milwaukee Bucks (1972) and the Washington Bullets (1978). Known for his remarkable ability to run the court, he earned the nickname “the Greyhound” and played at a consistently high level on both offense and defense, usually guarding the opponents’ best offensive player. He was an NBA All-Star four times and an All-Defensive player in 1979. That consistency was evidenced by career averages of 18.5 points, 6.8 rebounds and 3.4 assists per game. In 98 career playoff games, his averages increased to 20.1 points, 7.7 rebounds and 3.7 assists. Retiring after 13 professional seasons in 1982, he scored a total of 15,530 points. The Bucks retired his uniform number “10” in 2015. Mr. Dandridge has been elected to the Norfolk State University Athletics Hall of Fame (1983), the Virginia Sports Hall of Fame (1992) and the Hampton Roads Sports Hall of Fame (2012). He currently lives in Norfolk, VA.

Fred Harold “Doc” Sawyer

Booker T. Washington High, Norfolk (1957)

Football

Fred Sawyer was a scholar-athlete who learned the value of hard work in the classroom, respect for others and good sportsmanship. He became an outstanding academic student and played baseball and football. By his junior year he had acquired the nickname “Doc” because he mentored fellow students in mathematics and science courses. In football he became the starting offensive center and defensive middle linebacker. In 1956 he was Co-Captain of Booker T. Washington’s (Norfolk) undefeated VIA Group I State Football Championship team (10-0-0). At Virginia State College (now University) he compiled an outstanding academic record and was an All-CIAA football player in 1960 and 1961 as a two-way offensive guard and defensive linebacker. Upon graduation he was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the U. S. Army. As a career officer, he served two tours in the Republic of Viet Nam and rose to the rank of Full Colonel with certifications as a Ranger, Master Parachutist and Bronze Star recipient. In addition to attendance at the Armed Forces Staff College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, he was awarded the Ph.D. Degree from The George Washington University. After his military career, he made notable achievements as an entrepreneur and inventor. He was elected to the Virginia State University Sports Hall of Fame in 1997 and the Hampton Roads African American Sports Hall of Fame in 2009.

Louis Richard Harris

Parker-Gray High, Alexandria (1963)

Football

Louis Harris was a “Straight A” student who was captain of the baseball, football and basketball teams for four years. He was a starting forward on the 1963 Parker-Gray VIA Group I State Runner-up Basketball Team. He was also one of the first African Americans in Alexandria to play American Legion Baseball. Lou attended Kent State University in Ohio where he set the school record with 19 pass interceptions in only 23 games. In two consecutive

games, he intercepted three passes in each. He was first team All Mid-American Conference at free safety in his junior and senior years. A Sports Illustrated and Playboy Magazine All-American selection in his senior year, he played defensive back for the Pittsburg Steelers (1968-69). In 1970 he returned to Kent State University and completed requirements for his B. S. degree in Engineering Technology. After his NFL career he worked for several engineering firms in Ohio and Washington, D. C. He was also recognized for outstanding performance as an employee of the U. S. Department of Energy. After his death, the department created the Louis R. Harris Federal Energy and Water Management Award, which was given in his memory. The award was based on his belief in high professional standards, team-building skills, effective communications and a commitment to community service. Mr. Harris was posthumously elected to the Alexandria, VA African American Hall of Fame in 2013.

Coaches

Willard Bailey

Booker T. Washington High, Suffolk

Coach Willard Bailey won more games than any football coach in Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association (CIAA) history. A native of Suffolk, VA, he graduated with honors from Norfolk State University (1962) where he was a four-year letterman at offensive guard and linebacker. He later received a Master's in Education and Athletic Administration from New York University. Coach Bailey began his coaching career as a basketball, baseball and track and field coach at Essex County High School in Tappahannock, VA. In 1963 and 1964, his basketball teams won back-to back VIA Group II, District 7 Tournament Championships. His college coaching career began in 1964 at Virginia Union University (VUU) as an assistant football coach. In 1971 he was appointed head football coach at VUU, a position he held for 13 years. Coach Bailey was head coach at Norfolk State University from 1984 to 1992 then returned to VUU from 1995 to 2003. He completed his collegiate coaching career at St. Paul's College (2005 to 2010) and Virginia College in Lynchburg (2011 to 2013). He compiled and overall record of 238 wins, 168 losses and seven ties. Coach Bailey's teams won seven CIAA football championships and made six NCAA Division II playoff appearances, including five consecutive appearances from 1979 to 1983. More than 17 of his athletes played in the National Football League or the Canadian Football League. Coach Bailey's honors include induction into the CIAA Hall of Fame (2004), honored as Humanitarian of the Year by the Virginia Conference for Community and Justice (2006) and induction into the VUU Athletic Hall of Fame (2008).

James H. "Blue" Earley

Phenix High, Hampton

As a youth Coach James Earley was an all-around athlete at Dunbar High (Lynchburg) where he played on VIA Group I State Championship Basketball Teams in 1937 and 1938. From 1943 to 1946 he served in the U. S. Army. At North Carolina A & T State University he played baseball, basketball and football, and graduated in 1948 with a B. A. degree in French. Coach Earley was an All-CIAA football player. He later earned a Master's Degree from New York University. Before service at Phenix High in Hampton, he taught and coached at Southside High (Danville), J. E. J. Moore High (Prince George County) and Virginia Seminary and College (Lynchburg). He coached and taught at Phenix High from 1957 until its closing in 1968. Coach Earley then became the boys' basketball coach at Bethel High until 1970. His teaching career continued until he retired in 1983. He also became the first African American to be appointed as an Athletic Director at the onset of integration in the city of Hampton. His basketball teams at Phenix won several VIA Group I Eastern District Championships and advanced to the VIA State Tournament four times. Coach Earley was also an assistant football coach and was the first coach to start a baseball team at Phenix. In addition to teaching French, history and physical education, he was an enthusiastic, supportive and respected mentor, counselor and father figure in the community. Revered by all who came in contact with him, whether students or adults, he was an advocate for high ethical standards, sportsmanship and high moral character. Coach Earley was elected to the North Carolina A & T State University Hall of Fame in 1974.

Carl Peal**Peabody/Petersburg High, Petersburg**

Carl Peal was a versatile coach of football, basketball, golf and baseball at Peabody High in Petersburg, VA. His golf teams won consecutive VIA State Championships in 1963, 1964 and 1965 and was state runner-up in 1966. From 1956–1970, his basketball teams at Peabody compiled a record of 214-59 winning five regular season district championships and three district tournaments. His 1960 basketball team was undefeated VIA Group I State Champions with a record of 25-0. In the state championship game, they defeated Maggie L. Walker High of Richmond by a score of 46-34. Coach Peal's teams were known for their well-disciplined defensive minded style. After integration of Virginia's public schools in 1970, Coach Peal became head basketball coach at Petersburg High where he raised the program to national prominence. His 1972 team went 17-3 and was followed by consecutive Virginia High School League State Basketball Championships with identical records of 25-0. This 50-game winning streak is among the longest in Virginia high school basketball history. These teams featured the play of High School All American player Moses Malone, who was one of the all-time great players in National Basketball Association history. Mr. Peal concluded his teaching career as Assistant Principal at Petersburg High.

Contributors**William Albert "W. A." Brown****Carver High, Chesterfield County****Principal**

William Albert (W. A.) Brown's career as a teacher and administrator in Virginia's segregated schools is representative of the successes achieved by African American teachers within the system of "separate and unequal" public education. A native of Petersburg, VA, Brown graduated from Peabody High in 1926 and received a B. S. degree from Virginia Union University in 1930. In 1947 he was awarded the Master's Degree in Secondary Education at Virginia State College (now University). He was Principal of three African American high schools for 28 years: Russell Grove, Amelia (1936-1940), Nottoway County Training School (1940-1942) and Carver High, Chester, VA (1948-1970). Throughout his career, he fought the inequities of the segregated school system in Virginia. As principal In Nottoway County, he openly supported a suit by NAACP lawyer Oliver Hill which resulted in a court order requiring free school buses for all students, black and white. At Carver he fought for improvements to a school building which exceeded its capacity when opened. Upon the formation of the VIA in 1954 he helped establish guidelines for Science and Mathematics activities at the District and State levels. He also helped lead the transition to the full integration of Chesterfield County Public Schools in 1970. To facilitate early adjustment to the new environment, he decided that Carver would affiliate with the formerly all white Virginia High School League for its final two academic years (1968-69 and 1969-70). As Carver's only principal, his dedication to the teachers, support staff and students fostered a spirit of togetherness among all who entered the building. Under his leadership and guidance, Carver produced outstanding citizens who have made great contributions to the state and nation. In his honor, the George Washington Carver Alumni and Friends Association annually awards the William Albert "W. A." Brown Memorial Scholarship to a deserving Chesterfield County student.

Cheryl Anthony Epps**Southside High, Dinwiddie County (1966)****Lawyer**

Cheryl Anthony Epps was valedictorian of the class of 1966 at Southside High School. She won a competitive academic scholarship to Howard University, where she graduated with a B. A. degree in 1970. Having won a Ford Foundation Fellowship for graduate study at Howard, she earned the M. A. in Higher Education Administration in 1972 and the J. D. degree from the Georgetown University Law Center in 1983. Her specialization was in the

Prosecution Function, and she was selected for membership on the American Criminal Law Review. While in law school, she was recruited by the Office of the District Attorney, County of New York in Manhattan. She served as an Assistant District Attorney and Assistant Special Narcotics Prosecutor for the City of New York. Other positions included Legislative Director for the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Director of Government Policy for the National Drug Policy Foundation, and Assistant Counsel to the Crime and Criminal Justice Subcommittee of the U. S. House of Representative's Committee on the Judiciary, where she coordinated all capital punishment legislation in the House. From 2001 to 2011 she was an Assistant Professor in the pre-law program at American University, where she specialized in the perils and inequities of the criminal justice system as it applied to minorities and women. She was also a sought-after consultant in equal opportunity law for a range of federal agencies and international companies. Ms. Epps is now retired and living in Dinwiddie County.

Roger L. Gregory

Peabody/Petersburg High, Petersburg (1971)
Federal Judge

Judge Roger Gregory attended Peabody High School until the end of his junior year when Virginia's public schools were fully integrated. He graduated from Petersburg High in 1971. He graduated from Virginia State University in 1975 and the University of Michigan Law School in 1978. Judge Gregory began his legal career as an associate attorney with the firm of Butzel, Long, Gust, Klein & Van Zile in Detroit Michigan. He later associated with the firm of Hunton & Williams in Richmond, VA. In 1982 he formed the law firm of Wilder & Gregory with former Virginia Governor L. Douglas Wilder. He was appointed to the 4th U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond by President Bill Clinton in June 2000. His nomination was initially blocked by a southern senator who opposed efforts to diversify the courts. However, he was reappointed to the court by President George W. Bush and confirmed by the U. S. Senate on July 20, 2001. He was the first African American to sit on the court, which was the last federal circuit in the nation with all white judges. Judge Gregory earned a reputation as a distinguished and brilliant jurist whose leadership helped forge consensus in the 4th Circuit and evolve the thinking of the court. On July 9, 2016 he was appointed Chief Judge of the 4th Circuit, which is responsible for appellate cases from the states of Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. Judge Gregory holds honorary degrees from Virginia Union University, Virginia State University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Widener University and Saint Paul's College.

2018 Inductees into the VIAHA Hall of Fame were:

Athletes – Ronald Bolton, Joseph Bradley, Earl Faison, Jim Lewis and Jerry Venable.
Coaches – Alphonso Hamilton, Eugene Thompson, Arnold Thurmond and Willie Travis.
Contributors – William Bailey, Julian Earls and Marguerita Ragsdale.

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 Ernest Shaw.
Special Recognition – The Armstrong-Walker Football Classic.