

Brother Bright remembered for his kindnesses

Easton man fought for jobs for blacks, helped keep youths in school.

By Madeleine Mathias
Of The Morning Call

"Let the church say amen." And the faithful did Wednesday — over and over — in tribute to and memory of Thomas W. Bright, Easton's most prominent civil rights activist who died Friday at 90. Those words, the eulogists said, were Bright's way of lifting the spirits of the congregation. He used them many times during services at Union AME Church on Berwick Street, where he was a member for 49 years.

Hundreds of people came to the church not to mourn his death but to celebrate his "home going." They shouted, they raised their arms in praise, they applauded. When Bobra McAdams of Atlanta sang, "You shall behold Him," many stood or swayed in their seats.

Gospel hymns filled the sanctuary during the two-hour visitation before the noon service and as people left the church for the Hays Cemetery for interment.

Throughout the 1½-hour service, Bright was eulogized as a freedom fighter, as one who helped maintain peace during the turbulent 1960s and 1970s in his adopted home of Easton and who fought for jobs for blacks in the community.

Alfredean Jones, Easton

Area High School principal, was one of those. When Jones couldn't get a job in the Easton Area School District even though he had a college degree, Bright marched him into the administration building. Jones got a teaching job.

Brushing tears from his eyes, Jones said, "This man was special. ... He gave his all. Let his spirit run through us."

The Rev. Philip Davis read a letter from his father, the Rev. Fred Davis of Shiloh Baptist Church in Easton, who was out of the state, expressing his sorrow that he could not be there. He wrote that he loved "Big Daddy as my own father" and had lost a dear friend and confidant.

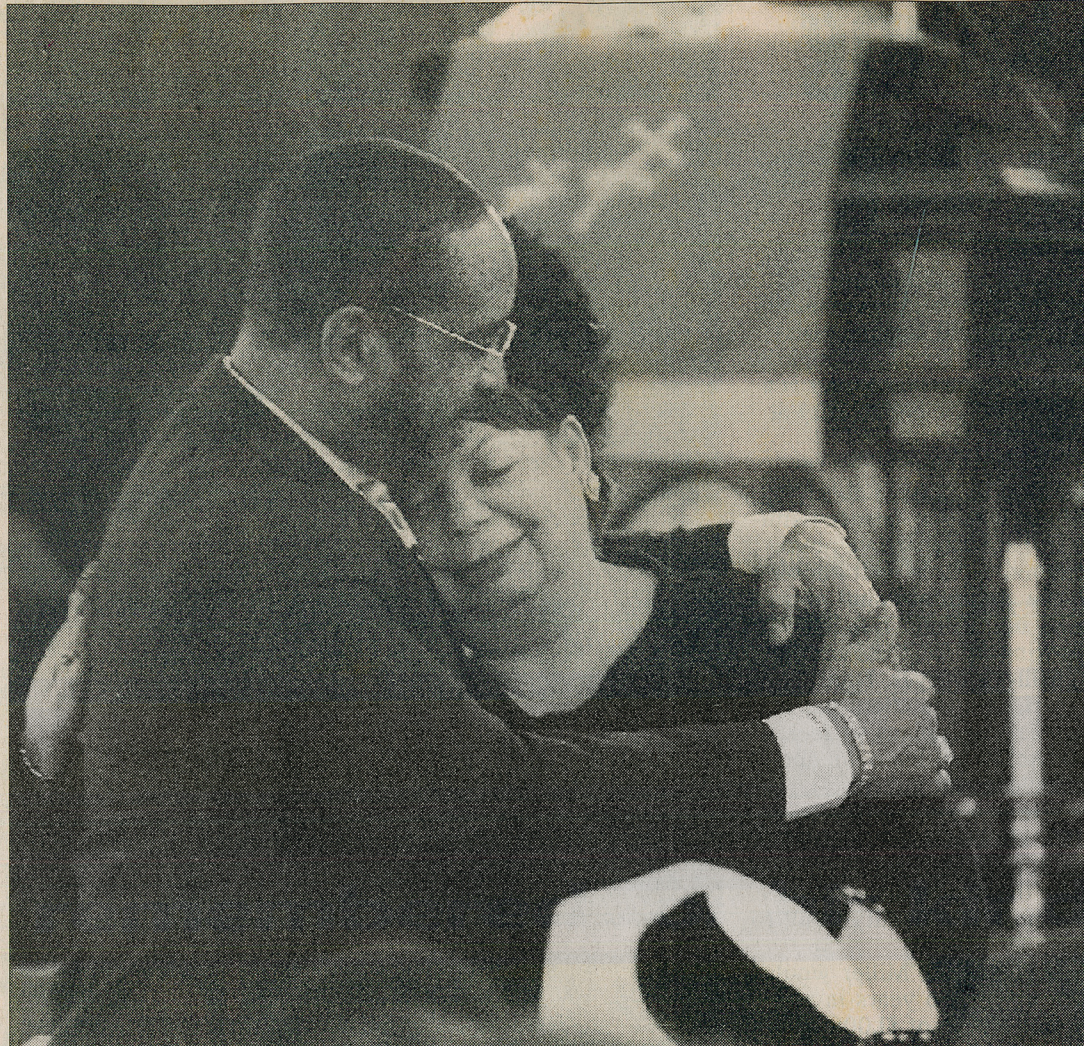
Resolutions in Bright's memory, sent by the state conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the national NAACP and the Easton NAACP were read by his grandson George Bright.

Those organizations noted that when Brother Bright — as he was known to everyone — "spoke, everyone listened." They also credited him with using his influence to make young people see their potential.

Bright was elected president of the Easton NAACP in 1963 and in 1990.

Brandi McMillian followed Bright's ritual, calling for those attending to "Let the church say amen" and they did, louder and louder.

Waltar Bright shared memories of how his father taught him the importance of not arguing in front of children.



Pete Shaheen The Morning Call

WALTAR BRIGHT, son of Thomas W. 'Brother' Bright who died Friday, and president of the Easton NAACP, hugs Bobra McAdams, who sang Wednesday at Bright's funeral in Union AME Church in Easton.

He also learned the importance of discipline when he ignored his dish-washing duties and his father made him turn in his football uniform.

People laughed as he de-

scribed the way his father called his children — No. 1 son, No. 2 son, baby son (Waltar), No. 1 twin and baby twin. "He knew his grandchildren by numbers and gender," Wal-

tar Bright said.

His father was a man of honor, a man who loved his community, his church, a man who loved God and shared that love, he said.

Before the service, John Robinson, a South Side Easton businessman, called Bright "our Martin Luther King," a sentiment echoed by many at the service.

Among those who journeyed home to pay tribute to their mentor were Maurice Wright of Boston, whom Bright helped get his first job with the Easton Redevelopment Authority and who has since spent 20 years in the banking industry; and Dick Lovell, retired after 15 years doing public relations for Larry Holmes.

"He brought us together and made us think," Lovell said. "He made black people reach out and he kept a lot of young people in school who might have dropped out."

Jack Bradt, retired founder of SI Handling Systems Inc. in Forks Township and a former human services director for Northampton County, said, "Bright was everything you like to see in a person: caring, loving. He came at a time of major changes in the country and provided the leadership to help us understand. He would not accept indifference nor prejudice. His legacy is overwhelming."

"He was always there to stand up for those disenfranchised from power," said state Rep. Robert Freeman, a Democrat from Easton. "He was a great guy who always had a twinkle in his eye."

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POLICE REPORT

BETHLEHEM

Charged — Harold Sopak, 27, of 731 Pawnee St.; Monday with possession of small amount of marijuana in 500 block of Pawnee Street; summons to be sent.

Charged — A 13-year-old Easton

girl; Tuesday with theft, receiving stolen property and disorderly conduct; allegedly fought with student at Centennial School, 2196 Avenue C, became unruly, took a teacher's wallet and left the building; referred to Northampton County Juvenile Probation.

Theft — Reported Tuesday by Carlos I. Medina of Bethlehem; blue jeans, leather belt and gold chain taken from boys locker room at Liberty High School; \$350 value.

Charged — Iris Quinones, 29, of

718 Wyandotte St., and two Bethlehem girls, ages 10 and 11; Tuesday with disorderly conduct; allegedly were fighting in 700 block of Wyandotte Street; citations issued.

WASHINGTON TOWNSHIP Lehigh County

Theft — Reported Wednesday by Joshua Sterner, 20, of Slatington; stereo system, 50 CDs and chrome intake air cleaner taken from vehicle in 3100 block of Friedens Road;

\$1,579 value; anyone with information is asked to contact state police at 610-861-2026.

HANOVER TOWNSHIP Lehigh County

Charged — Tad J. Walck, 18, of Allentown; three Allentown teens, ages 17 and 19; and 16-year-old Northampton boy; Feb. 9 with underage drinking at McIntosh Inn, 1701 Catasaqua Road; two of the juveniles were also charged with giving false identification; citations

issued.

WHITEHALL TOWNSHIP

Charged — A 15-year-old girl; Sunday with retail theft; allegedly took three shirts and a bra from Kohl's in Whitehall Mall; citation issued.

LOWER SAUCON TOWNSHIP

Charged — Dawn Newman, 39, of 1631 Orchard Road; Monday with harboring a dangerous dog and a

licensing violation; police said her Australian shepherd bit Emil Seglias of 1989 West Point Drive in the face; Seglias was treated at St. Luke's Hospital; citations to be sent.

PLAINFIELD TOWNSHIP

Charged — William Balaskas, 33, of 7884 Little Creek Road, Lower Mount Bethel Township; with drunken driving and careless driving last Thursday on Sullivan Trail near Route 512; summons to be issued.