



Alton T. Carson

April 26, 2020

Alton Tommie Carson, affectionately known as "Big Al Carson", went home to be with the Lord on Sunday, April 26, 2020 at the age of 66. Born October 2, 1953 to the late Richard Carson and Gloria Carson-Ison (Stepson of Romalis Ison) of New Orleans, LA. A New Orleans native and musical icon, Al was a graduate of Booker T. Washington High school. He later attended Xavier University of New Orleans majoring in Music. In the late 70's as a Gospel Singer and member of Old Zion Baptist Church, he became known within the Gospel Music Community while performing with the popular Christ Elite Gospel Choir. He was a Scottish Rights Mason for many years. In the late 80s, his tremendous talent as a Tuba player as well as his one of a kind voice scored Al a role in the Nationally Acclaimed stage play One Mo' Time. A highly visible musician and proud member of the New Orleans Musicians Foundation, Al was an intricate part of several highly regarded New Orleans Dixieland and Jazz Bands such as Doc Paulin's Dixieland Brass Band, Herman-Sherman's Brass Band, Young Tuxedo Brass Band, Dejan's Olympia Brass Band, and Teddy Riley's Royal Brass Band to name a few. One could catch Big Al at the New Orleans Jazz & Heritage Festival, New Orleans French Quarter Festival, the Zulu Lundi Gras Festival and occasionally at The House of Blues. Many years ago he could be found at 4th Edition and Pampies Lounge, until landing on Bourbon Street at The Funky Pirate where he and the Blues Masters performed nightly for over 20 years.

Alton "Big Al" Carson is survived by wife: Corina Carson, mother-in-law:

Carlota Sussmann, stepsons: Desmond Sampson and Jose Barrios (Annik), grandchildren: La' Salle Galloway, Desmond Sampson Jr. and Julien Barrios, sisters: Greer Lauriano (Adolph) and Cynthia Zeno, sisters-in-law: Martha Scheurmann (Randy) and Carla D' Bran, brothers-in-law: Henry, Adolfo and Daniel Sussmann, nieces and nephews: Charlotte Hewitt (Patrice), Adele Hill (Rovan) , Jeanne Zeno, James Lauriano (Venetia), Jude "Jaz" Zeno Jr., Maurice Lauriano, Gabriel Cathy, Ryan and Dylan Schuermann, Noah Sussman, Adessa, Jon-Carlos, and Jonathan D'Bran along with a host of other relatives, musicians and very special friends.

Due to the Government Social Distancing Guidelines, the family prepares for a private service, however, a public drive-thru viewing will be held at D.W. Rhodes Funeral Home, 3933 Washington Ave. New Orleans, LA 70125 on Saturday, May 2, 2020 at 4:00pm until 5:30 pm. A musical will be streamed live on D.W. Rhodes Funeral Home Facebook page at 6:00 pm. Please TEXT FUN RFH to 797979 to sign guestbook and/or visit www.rhodesfuneral.com to leave well wishes, share memories and condolences for family. If in immediate area tune to FM radio link 90.1 to share in musical. Like us on Facebook to watch Live Stream of funeral service honoring Alton T. "Big Al" Carson. Arrangements by D.W. Rhodes Funeral Home, 3933 Washington Ave. New Orleans, LA 70125.

Previous Events

Service

MAY 2. 4:00 PM - 5:30 PM (CT)

Rhodes Funeral Home - Washington Avenue
3933 Washington Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70125
(504) 822-7162
<https://www.rhodesfuneral.com>

Tribute Wall

SS

“ Rest in peace uncle you so talented your spirit live on the everyone I listen to your songs to remember memory it crazy how young I was when I first saw now I'm an adult how a lot of us have I know you watching down



Scott Sussmann - January 18, 2025 at 05:10 PM

SK

“ Will missyou Big Al - New Orleans won't be the same. Sue Kauflie

Sue Kauflie - May 21, 2020 at 09:39 AM

TR

“ Dear Carson Family , My deepest sympathy . Prayers and blessing go to your family . Big Al was the highlight of my trip when ever I visit New Orleans by way of Atlanta , Georgia . I would not leave without seeing him. I was introduce to him through my friend Judy who resides in New Orleans and since then I would make my way to see him ever visit . I last visit New Orleans in October 2019 for my sister Vanessa 50th Birthday celebration and he sing his heart out to her . He was one of the best blues singer I know . Rest Easy Big Al. I will miss seeing you !!



Trena R - May 06, 2020 at 11:58 AM

HB

“ *Big Al as we fondly called him was a fellow classmate and He touch my life with his kind demeanor. He will be missed greatly by many!*



Hazel J Bolds - May 05, 2020 at 05:28 AM

CC

“ *Dear Carson Family, please accept my deepest sympathy and condolences. I am so sorry for your loss. Big AL was such a special person. Many blessings. Catherine Castro*

Catherine Castro - May 04, 2020 at 12:04 PM

CC

“ *Rest in peace, dear friend. I met you in 1992 when we went on Mayor Barthelemy's trip to Matsue, Japan, for the signing of the sister city accord with that city. The Japanese were very impressed with you and your musical talent. The Japanese love New Orleans and its music and you and your band were the very best representatives of the unique music that only New Orleans has. Many blessings. Catherine Castro*

Catherine Castro - May 04, 2020 at 11:49 AM

DP

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



deena P - May 02, 2020 at 09:47 PM

PS

“ True condolences to the family. God used him to bring musical joy to the lives of so many. Enjoyed playing along side him in the Fairview Baptist Church Christian Marching Band. May God bring peace and strength to the family.

Pastor Christopher Sylvain

Pastor Christopher Sylvain - May 02, 2020 at 08:38 PM

RC

“ Al you will truly be missed by so many. We may not be able to see you anymore but your musical talent and singing will live on forever until we all meet again. I loved hearing all the funny things that Al would text Corina and I would work . You were one funny guy. A true legend will be missed. All our love and prayers go out to Corina and extended family. RIP Al. Love , Ramona & Maynard

Ramona Cook - May 02, 2020 at 07:07 PM

SS

“ Missing you Uncle Al I know that God needed you more to help him with the heavenly pearly gates choir we love you and always will .Sherry Sampson and family .



Sherry Sampson - May 02, 2020 at 06:46 PM

JE

“ Big AL - a one of a kind man and huge musical talent, who will be greatly missed. We offer our sincere condolences to his family and the many other close friends he leaves behind. Jerry and Darlene Embree

Jerry Embree - May 02, 2020 at 06:44 PM

RC

“ A musical legend will truly be missed. Our thoughts, prayers, and all of our love goes out to Corina, the Carson family, and extended family members and friends. Al you will be missed until we all meet again. Your singing will live on forever. Love Ramona and Robert Cook

Ramona Cook - May 02, 2020 at 06:12 PM

MW

“ My deepest condolences go to the family of Alton Carson. My many years of knowing Big Al started in 1974 at Xavier University where he was an early inspiration who introduced me to Doc Paulin. Over the years we shared many adventures in countless brass band parades and other music jobs. Playing well, singing with ultimate soul, and making people laugh and feel good we're always present with Al. Our last conversation of a few weeks ago concluded with my promising to come hear him on Bourbon St. again soon. Now he's singing with the "angels' blues band" and playing sousaphone in the heavenly "eternal second line" where we will all join him one blessed day. I'm am praying to the Creator to give his family strength, peace, and spiritual comfort at this most difficult time.
Michael White

Michael White - May 02, 2020 at 04:39 PM

NW

“ Al's smile, his music and love of his family were special . He has given so many wonderful moments to our community and the world. Blessings and prayers to his family and gratitude for Al.

Nancy Wagner - May 02, 2020 at 04:09 PM

JG

“ We have so many memories of Al Carson that it is hard to talk about just a few. We were working in New Orleans in 1998 and heard that we had to go down to this place called the Funky Pirate to hear a fabulous blues man. We were hooked! Once we were no longer working every other week in town, we began our four to five times a year travels down to New Orleans. Front and center every night we were there to listen to Al and the Bluesmasters. In 2002 we got married by Reverend Tony in the Funky Pirate with Al sitting behind us (left picture below). We surprised him at Jazz Ascona in Switzerland one year to watch him perform, we were at the Pirate for his surprise 50th birthday party, and we were there in the front row in October 2018 when he made his triumphant return to performing at the Pirate. Our latest pictures together from last year show that we've all aged a little in the last 20 years! We will forever cherish all our memories and treasure the gifts that our friend gave us with his friendship and love.



Jack & Lisa Galentine - May 02, 2020 at 03:53 PM

HT

“ Corina and Family, we are devastated about Al's passing. So many of Me and Frank's memories while dating include Al. We loved him, will miss him and we will treasure our memories always. Much Love-Heidi & Frank



Heidi and Frank Thiel - May 02, 2020 at 03:31 PM

TM

“ Corina, my thoughts and prayers are with you! I am so sorry for your loss. Lots of Love-
Trudy



Trudy Miller - May 02, 2020 at 03:24 PM

GV

“ Much Love to the Family and Friends. Big Al will be missed. He has lived a fulfilled happy life. God’s mission for Big Al here on earth is finished, bigger and better things are in store for Big Al! Continuous prayers always!
Sincerely,
Glenda M. Veal

Glenda M. Veal - May 02, 2020 at 02:37 PM

PB

“ Corina, I’m so very sorry the loss of your husband. Words are inadequate at a time like this. You will be in my prayers. May God give you comfort and peace.

Pam Bailey - May 02, 2020 at 01:15 PM

JS

“ Big Al was such a wonderful person. Last year I was with him at French Quarter Fest. He will truly be missed. My prayers are with his family. Corina, God bless you and keep you close. I m so sorry for your loss. Al is going to heaven and we will see him there.

Janie Spellman - May 02, 2020 at 11:43 AM

JL

*Our deepest condolences to Mrs. Corina , and her entire family for the lost of someone very dear to you ,and so special to everyone.
May God Bless you all.
In our prayers for the entire family.
James an Savannah Morgan.*

james & savannah morgan Jose's in laws - May 02, 2020 at 05:30 PM

CS

I knew Al through my sister Yolanda Sampson. He was my brother in law. He will truly be missed. Love you Al,R.I.P. Prayers to my sister, nephew and great niece. Prayers also to his family.

Carol Ann Sampson - May 04, 2020 at 09:51 AM

PD

“ *My Condolences to Cynthia and the Carson Family. Big Al and me grew up in Old Zion Baptist Church together. Mrs. Gloria and Al would sing together and rock the church house. He will be sadly missed by a lot of Friends and Fans.*

Patricia Bunn Deruise - May 02, 2020 at 11:03 AM

WM

“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



Wayne Manigo - May 02, 2020 at 10:35 AM

BF

Our deepest condolences to the Carson family Mr.and Mrs. Bryant Foster.. Take your rest my friend,my brother. Thanks for all the wisdom that you shared with me.. You will truly be missed..

Bryant Foster - May 02, 2020 at 04:05 PM

JH

Over the years, I had the Privilege of being in several commercials with "Big Al"; including one for a European candy bar that was shot near black no you over a period of days...they put me on the snare drums, so I was in the little jazz band with Al...it was very hot, but some of the most funniest things happened during those days...couldn't laugh any harder and Al had a little saying; it was" yea yea yea!!!"....so we became friends....over the years I would pass by the Funky Pirate, and as a wonderful big man with an even Bigger Heart; Big "Al" would stay true to form; he never forgot that friendship...A Great Loss to our community...May the Good Lord continue to Bless all y'all his family and other friends...from: Jack Harris (local actor and friend...)...

Jack Harris - May 03, 2020 at 01:45 PM

JH

The site of the commercial was black bayou...

Jack Harris - May 03, 2020 at 01:47 PM

GV

“ *Our good friend for many decades, Big Al Carson, in grateful and loving memory.
Gunnar Gotaas, the Magnolia Jazzband of Oslo, Norway, and
Ragnar Vik*

Gunnar Gotaas, Ragnar Vik - May 02, 2020 at 10:03 AM

 John Walker

“ *Alton T. "Big Al" Carson. Who else but Big Al could roll from Jesus Just Left Chicago to Footsteps to Amazing Grace to a bunch of hard partiers in the Funky Pirate. I was waiting for the Alter Call. God Bless this Special Man and the family friends and fans who mourn him and will miss him forever.*

John Walker - May 02, 2020 at 09:35 AM

RC

“ *My deepest condolences, Al had a heart of gold.. I'll never forget him giving me a pair of shoes when I was short changed and my shoes were falling apart.. those shoes carried me through learning line dance and eventually hip hop, he played a huge part of me becoming who I did, much love and respect. Rome Cross (The Dancing Doorman-retired)*

Rome Cross - May 02, 2020 at 08:34 AM

LS

“ *CORINA AND CARLITA , MY PRAYERS ARE WITH YOU AND THE FAMILY. YOU KNOW AL WAS ONE OF MY NEW ORLEANS FAVORITE. LOVE YOU . LAVERNE FROM OCHSNER.*

LAVERNE STEWART - May 01, 2020 at 07:53 PM

 Errol Duvernay

“ *Take your rest my Brother...I will miss you singing down here. Hold down the Tenor section in heaven until we sing again!*

Errol Duvernay - May 01, 2020 at 07:27 PM



“ *Al became my reason to bother going to Bourbon Street whenever we visit. Other than his talent and entertaining, he was a very nice man. Traipsing up and down Bourbon will never be the same again for me. Grateful that I had him sign my cd the last time I saw him.*

My condolences to the family. He's Up There happily performing non-stop concerts now.

Mary Mendonca - May 01, 2020 at 06:47 PM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Alton T. Carson.*



May 01, 2020 at 06:40 PM



“ *In total shock. Mr. Carson, you were as important to us as Mardi Gras itself. New Orleans will never be the same.*

Dave Hughes - May 01, 2020 at 06:34 PM



“ *RIH MY FRIEND GONE IN BODY BUT YOU WILL ALWAYS BR NEAR MY HEART. 💜. REST MY BFF*



glenda. and gregory glapion - May 01, 2020 at 06:20 PM

BB

“ Oh, my dearest of friends! My greatest teacher of life and music. It means so much to have spoken to you days before you went home. My love never stops, my respect only grows. Corina, please find some comfort in knowing how much he gave to this world. His love for us was amazing and his heart captured us all. I love you Mr. Carson. Your joyous blues changed my entire world. This great man touched my heart, soul and lifted me beyond anyone else in this world and I will never forget. I will never forget his joyful spirit, his beautiful smile and his heart full laughter. “Hello, Good Evening” Mrs. Corina Carson, I am forever grateful to have also known you and to have been welcomed into your home. Please know I do not pretend to understand, but I do know exactly how you are feeling now. It will change, it will become somehow easier even though the pain of loss is overwhelming and will never go away. The love you share still lives on and will forevermore.

Bruce Boneau - May 01, 2020 at 05:19 PM

UH

“ Big Al will be truly missed my husband loved his song built for comfort not for speed and every time I would go over to New Orleans after my husband passed to hear him I had him the sing that song . He would always sing it for me. My prayers are with the family my god continue to be with ya'll doing your time of grieving .
Umica Hunter

Umica Hunter - May 01, 2020 at 05:15 PM

ML

My condolences to the Carson family.

Mr.tillen LABRANCH - May 02, 2020 at 08:34 AM

KT

“ Sending my heart felt condolences to you Corina. Sending my love and continuous prayers 🙏💙💙
Keela Thibodeaux

Keela Thibodeaux - May 01, 2020 at 03:08 PM

IW

My condolences to his family he will be truly miss take your rest great friend!!!

Ida Webster - May 02, 2020 at 06:16 AM



“ A New Sunrise Spray was purchased for the family of Alton T. Carson.



May 01, 2020 at 02:20 PM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Alton T. Carson.



May 01, 2020 at 01:39 PM

JS

“ *Big Al was one of my dad, Earl Bernhardt's, dearest friends and I'd known him since I was a teenager. He was the kindest man with the most infectious smile. He just made you happy when you were around him. I've celebrated birthdays and anniversaries at The Funky Pirate. He always made sure to sing me a song. He sang beautifully at my dad's funeral. He will be remembered not just for his incredible talent but for being an incredible man. I know he and my dad are rejoicing together in heaven. My prayers are with his family and friends. Love to all, Jennifer Bernhardt-Scott*

Jennifer Bernhardt Scott - May 01, 2020 at 01:36 PM

KI

“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*



KATHY INGRAM - May 01, 2020 at 01:25 PM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Alton T. Carson.*



May 01, 2020 at 12:59 PM

WM

“ Thank you for over 20 years of making New Orleans a special place to visit. You will be deeply missed!



Wayne Manigo - May 01, 2020 at 11:11 AM

WW

“ Whenever we traveled to NOLA we always tried to stop by the Funky Pirate to listen to Big Al. Such a talented and nice guy. RIP big guy!

Warren from MS

Warren Wright - May 01, 2020 at 10:05 AM

RP

“ I was blessed to know him! He enlightened me with his determination to return to the Blues Masters, which he did. With a smile! I know he's singing with Jesus and he talked Mother Mary into carrying the tip bucket around as only he could! He is smiling down upon us!

Randy J. Rose PT - May 01, 2020 at 10:03 AM

TO

“ Cynthia, the Green and Brown families are praying with you and for you and your family. May God comfort you and all of those who loved him and will miss him.

Toni and Darryl Brown

Toni - May 01, 2020 at 08:52 AM

TE

“ I live outside of Philly PA but had the good fortune of visiting the Crescent City quite often during a long sales and marketing career that bring get me to town for conventions.

There was one place I would never miss visiting when I was there - Pirates Cove - to hear the sweet blues sounds of the Human Blues jukebox Big Al Carson and the sweetest soul music found in the city. Sweet because it flowed from the heart and soul of this beautiful human being.

He didn't know me yet always smile when I would place money in the tip jar . Some nights I would drink that godawful green hand grenade and regret it the next morning. But I'd never regret a night spent in Big Al's presence, amazed by the big man's talent. The fact he had a bigger heart for all of humanity as he sharing his god given talent singing the only true form of American music.

I cried the night I read Mem's post that he has passed from this world to the next. I hope the family finds comfort in the memories shared when we beheld him here with us.

I shall never forget Big Al Carson and regret I did not have the chance to thank him for all those nights, back in a world that no longer exists.

*Tom Elmer
Philly Blues Founder*

Thomas Elmer - May 01, 2020 at 06:11 AM

MS

“ Prayers and condolences to the family.

Mem Shannon - May 01, 2020 at 05:43 AM

BF

“ *Godspeed, Big Al. Thank you for the music and the memories. You will be missed by many. My heartfelt condolences to the family. May perpetual light shine upon him* 🙏🕊️

Brandy Burleigh Fontenot - May 01, 2020 at 05:22 AM

AF

“ *R.I.P. Alton you was a Great 1 , God got a good 1 for His Band , See you 1 Day Brother*

A friend - May 01, 2020 at 03:26 AM



“ *Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Alton T. Carson.*



May 01, 2020 at 03:05 AM

DP

“ *I think the 1st time we saw Big Al was at the Funky Pirate in '2002. We've been a fan ever since & always made it to his shows every trip to Nola that he was playing. Even saw him at FQF & Jazz Fest. He will be missed & heaven just gained another beautiful voice. RIP*



Deena P - May 01, 2020 at 01:23 AM

RR

“ Our thoughts are with you. Thinking of you in these difficult times. My prayers are with you and your family, Our hearts go out to you and your time of sorrow, sharing in your sorrow with Love and Friendship from Rodney and Ella Rollins 💕

Rodney and Ella Rollins - May 01, 2020 at 01:21 AM

JS

“ JeffAndJodi Smith lit a candle in memory of Alton T. Carson



JeffAndJodi Smith - April 30, 2020 at 10:46 PM

BR

“ Al and I shared a running joke for over 25 years we would greet each other with it on our respective gigs. It started in a little club on Jazzman St. I think it was named the 4th edition. I weighed about 160lbs and was about 6ft tall a total beanpole. We would say we were identical twins and the only way you could tell us apart was because Al had a Jerry curl. I always did a song as a comedian stroking the Brother Randy version he would always say he's doing his twin brother version when he sang it. With eyes filled with tears, a mind filled with memories, and a spirit filled with an unending love that transcend all things I say rest in peace to my identical twin brother.

Brother Randy - April 30, 2020 at 10:41 PM



“ On my many visits to New Orleans, enjoying Al's one of a kind voice and welcoming persona at the Funky Pirate was an experrence that always warmed my heart. My sincere condolences to Al's family. Marty from NYC.

Marty Plevel - April 30, 2020 at 09:46 PM



“ R.I.P. Big AlI Lloved when I would go to the Pirate,If I had had too many Al would not give me his tamborine...,I would get the bar's ! ...Love You brother .

John Dandy - April 30, 2020 at 09:05 PM

“ Big Al Carson

I'm still in shock. I promise that I won't continue to fill my thread with posts about him, but this one hurts.

I met Big Al, during our response to Katrina. I often laugh about the fact that Bourbon St. was back in action before most of the hospitals were - if you got drunk, fell down and hit your head - we had no place to treat you!

So, there we were, in a wild town, filled on a Friday night with First Responders, trying to blow off some stress. As per the requirements, we hit every bar on the strip, finally getting down to 727 Bourbon St - The Funky Pirate (Arrrrhh!). The sound of the blues flowing out the open doors was like a magnet to me!

There, sitting on his ubiquitous bench - truly, his throne - sat one of the biggest men I've ever seen. 500 pounds of pure, soulful, blues. Big Al Carson. Along side him, the one and only Harry Sterling, on guitar, Harold Scott, on bass and Rodney Rollins, on drums - The Blues Masters! I was blown away!

I have been a blues harp player for decades, and would never go to a music town like NOLA, without at least a basic brace of harps, covering the usual keys of the blues. That night was no different. Between sets, I asked Al, "got room up there for a skinny harp player?" His response: "can you play?" was delivered with a look that told me he meant it.

I gave him a bit of a rundown on some folks I'd played with. He asked my name and where I was from, to which I replied, well, my musical friends call me "Fast Eddie." As for where I was from, at the time, it was New York.

After a song or two in the next set, Al asked, "where's Fast Eddie, from New York City? Get on up here!" So, I did.

*Once I got up on the stage, Al looked out to the crowd - the joint was packed - and said, "Every now and then, somebody asks if they can sit in with us. Sometimes, we let them." Then, he turned his head and looked at me and continued, " but if you make us look bad, I got a man out back that's bigger than me, and he's gonna kick your a**!"*

No pressure, right?

I grinned at Al and replied, "Bring it on, Big Man!" And so began a friendship that's lasted for almost 15 years.

*Needless to say, I did not get my a** kicked that night. And I didn't leave the stage for the rest of the gig. Since that night, I've sat in with the Blues Masters on countless occasions - beyond a doubt, my favorite musical memories...though we all found it more comfortable for me to stand to the side of the stage - it was pretty well filled by "Three Fat Cats and One Skinny Dog!"*

I will truly miss those wild nights at The Funky Pirate. From that first day forward - even though I hadn't lived in New York for years - every time I walked in to the Pirate, Al would announce: "Fast Eddie from New York City, in da house!"

Harold Scott (the "Skinny Dog") passed away, only a couple of weeks ago, may peace be with his soul. Now, he and Al are surely at it again!

The clip I'm sharing here, was recorded by Alton Carson, just days before his passing. It shows the heart and soul of this man, who was only so physically large, because that's what was needed, to hold his giant heart.

Eddie Minyard - April 30, 2020 at 09:02 PM

LS

“ *Big Al and The Funky Pirate was always a must in NOLA. His powerful voice and big personality filled the room. After the hurricane I was able to track information in a chat room that he was ok. He will be very missed. May he rest in peace. My prayers to his loved ones. Laila Sukkariyyah - Arlington, VA*

laila sukkariyyab - April 30, 2020 at 08:56 PM