



Gerald W. Johnson

May 5, 2026

Gerald W. Johnson, loving husband, father, and grandfather, cherished friend, entrepreneur, and civil rights activist, passed away peacefully on May 5, 2026, at the age of 101. Born on January 28, 1925, in New Orleans, Louisiana, Gerald was the son of Arthur and Wilhelmina and grew up alongside his five siblings, Arthur, Alma, Wellington, Felton, and Wilhelmina, who all predeceased him.

Gerald joined the United States Navy in 1943 and served overseas during World War II. After being discharged in 1945 he returned to New Orleans, where, ten years before Rosa Parks made history for her stand against racism, he made his own stand, refusing to abide by the sign that mandated where he was allowed to sit on a New Orleans city bus. This refusal to accept prejudice, injustice, and exclusion was a hallmark of Gerald's life that fueled both his activism and entrepreneurial spirit. Whether through his early work organizing business boycotts and picket lines or his later efforts focused on building small businesses that centered the needs of minorities, he never stopped fighting to break down barriers to ensure everyone had equal access to opportunity.

In 1945, Gerald moved to San Francisco, CA where he lived for more than 70 years. The City by the Bay is where he raised his three children, Sara, Domingo, and Kimberley, and where he met the love of his life, Valerie, with whom he shared a beautiful 55-year journey filled with love, laughter, friends, and countless memories. Theirs was a partnership that extended beyond

marriage; together they founded the Small Business Exchange newspaper, dedicated to providing small businesses, including those owned by women, minorities, and veterans, with the information they needed to succeed. Gerald was a loving grandfather to his two grandchildren, Daniel and Sara, and was often found surrounded by a host of nieces, nephews, and other relatives and friends.

Gerald was known for his deep knowledge of history and politics and his love of music – especially the blues, New Orleans jazz, and country. He had a sly and expansive sense of humor and enjoyed making those around him laugh, always ready with a joke or a clever comment. His warmth, fierce intelligence, generosity, and kind spirit were felt by all who were privileged to know him. He cherished moments spent with his family and friends - new and old - nurturing relationships that were the cornerstone of his life.

A Mass to honor and celebrate Gerald's life will be held at St. Louis Cathedral, 615 Pere Antoine Alley, New Orleans on June 22, 2026, at 1:45 p.m. Visitation will begin at 1:15 p.m. In lieu of flowers, the family welcomes donations to St. Jude's Children's Hospital.

Gerald will be remembered not only for the life he lived but for the love he gave, the laughter he shared, and the legacy he leaves behind. His family and friends will miss him dearly and cherish his memory in their hearts forever.

Cemetery Details

Private

Upcoming Events

Visitation

JUN 22. 1:15 PM - 1:45 PM (CT)

St. Louis Cathedral
615 Pere Antoine Alley
New Orleans, LA 70116

Funeral Mass

JUN 22. 1:45 PM (CT)

St. Louis Cathedral
615 Pere Antoine Alley
New Orleans, LA 70116