

From the Cradle to the Grave Our Legacy of Love and Hope

**A Collection of African-American Funeral Programs
1958-2005**

“The Jesse Turner Story”

How many ways can you think of the number 50? Fifty percent of anything equals a half. “Fifty,” is the nickname of world-famous rapper, 50 Cent. Former President Ulysses S. Grant is on the \$50. Fifty years is half a century and 50 was the age of Jesse Turner when he left this world.

“Jesse was such a nice loving child,” said Mrs. Annie Mae Lee, 81, Turner’s sister.

Lee said she and Turner grew up on a farm in Haywood County, Tenn. with their parents and 12 siblings.

“We worked so hard (on the farm). School was only five months-three in the summer and two in the winter. Sunrise, we would get in the fields and pick corn and peas. It was hard work. We had to plow with mules. Mind you, we didn’t have any farming equipment (machines),” she said.

Lee said farming was her family’s life. From sunup till sundown they worked.

“Jesse would cut hay and stack it. He’d pull the corn, throw it in the wagon and take it up to the house. The cows would wander away and Jesse and the boys would have to come home and get them. We enjoyed it (farming), but in the evening we would be so tired.”

According to Lee, her family lived in a two-room house. The house was so small the Turners had to put beds in the kitchen and the hall. She said times were hard but they made it. When they weren't working in the fields, the Turner siblings invented games to entertain themselves because they didn't have a television. She said one of Jesse's favorite games was the "Line" game.

"We'd get in a line," she said. "Since there were 14 of us it was a long line. The first person in the line would say one thing and by the time it got to the last person, it was something totally different than what the first person had said."

The Turner children also enjoyed a good game of "Corn."

"We would put a piece of corn in one person's hand and then we had to guess whose hand it was in. We'd play all kinds of games like that. We didn't have a TV," she said.

Lee said Turner loved vegetables and fresh cut onions. Whatever he ate, he would cut up onions and put them on top of it; a taste she said he acquired from their mother, Annie Sue. Aside from his love for onions and vegetables, Turner was a baseball fanatic.

"He loved baseball. He used to play for a team called Koko." Lee said the Koko team was a small community baseball team.

When Turner grew up he left Haywood County and moved to St. Louis, Mo. with his wife, Rosie. There, he made his living as a butcher. Lee said the reason Turner and several of his siblings left Haywood County was similar.

"Since they worked so hard on the farm, they always wanted to away," she said.

Lee said most of her siblings ended up moving away once they were grown, except for her. Lee married a farmer and continued to live on a farm until her triplets

were born. Lee was already a mother of four. They had to give up the farming life. Lee's husband turned to construction work and she worked in factories. She said Turner, a father of two, loved children so much he offered to take in one of her daughters.

“He loved children. If he had lived to see his grandchildren I know he would have been crazy for them,” she said.

Turner died of a massive heart attack in 1975. Lee had these lasting words to say about her brother, “The rest of his life he was a kind Christian soul,” she said. “He loved everyone.”

A.A.