



Frank Hatchett III

December 7, 1935 - December 23, 2013

SPRINGFIELD - Frank Hatchett III, affectionately known throughout the world as “Papa Frank”, of Chicopee, MA was born on December 7, 1935 in Danville, VA. He was the son of late parents, Frank Hatchett and Mary (Brandon) Hatchett. He transitioned from this life on Monday, December 23, 2013. Frank was raised by his beloved grandparents, James Brandon and Mamie (Kirby) Brandon. He was the brother of Viola Mae (Sisso) Hatchett Lucas and James Weldon (Brother) Hatchett. He leaves a wealth of family and friends who will forever miss him dearly. Frank grew up in East Hartford, CT and Springfield, MA. Mr. Hatchett was always artistically inclined and on a dare from his friends, decided to pursue dance in high school. He started dance and choreography at East Hartford High School, becoming their first male cheerleader. Mr. Hatchett studied dance under the guidance of such teachers as Marge Fielding-Hayles (a former Ziegfeld Follies dancer), June Taylor, Alvin Ailey, Henry LeTang, and most of all, Syvilla Fort of The Katherine Dunham School of Dance in New York. In the 60s and 70s, Frank began a 10-year professional career which included appearances in major nightclubs in New York, Las Vegas, and Miami as well as television appearances with Sammy Davis Jr., Eartha Kitt, Harry Belafonte, and Jackie Gleason. After many years as a performer in theater, movies, music videos, television and concerts, Mr. Hatchett was still very much in demand as a Master Teacher / Choreographer for most all major dance organizations and dance studios around the country. Frank moved back to Springfield and realized that in his

community, there was a lack of dance schools to develop the potential that he saw in neighborhood youth. In 1967, he established The Hatchett School of Dance on Eastern Avenue with over one hundred children attending. With the help of Robert Jennings and Peggy Clinton, Frank moved his dance school to The Dunbar Community Center. Many of his first students were on “scholarships” and didn’t pay for classes. It was here where Frank’s VOP® technique began. From the beginning, Frank’s first students considered him more than a dance teacher. Anyone who visited the Dunbar could see youth taking dance lessons in ballet, tap, modern, African, modeling, charm and even percussion. You would see others practicing routines, helping with costumes or even doing homework. Frank always checked his student’s report cards to make sure that they were keeping up with their school work; he was known for suspending a student from classes for not keeping up with their classwork. Over the years Frank’s enrollment rose from 100 to over 500 students per dance year. Aside from his dance school in Springfield, in the late 60’s and early 70’s, Frank also had a dance school in Hartford, CT. Mr. Hatchett choreographed many events throughout Western Mass, including: The Black Arts Festival, The Harambee Festival, Our Crowd’s Annual Cotillion, The Sophisticates Annual Cotillion and The Tech Tantrums Variety Show (which featured students from Technical High School). Frank and his students performed at local colleges and high schools, various country clubs, and shopping malls throughout Western Mass and the surrounding area. The Hatchett Dancers also had the opportunity to perform in New York City, Hartford, for various events presented by The City of Springfield, and for students and officers of The United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, MD. Under his guidance, Mr. Hatchett’s students participated in Dance Olympics, Dance Olympus, Hal Jackson’s Talented Teens International Scholarship Program, Star Search and numerous Broadway plays and musicals. Since the dance schools inception, Mr. Hatchett always presented an Annual Recital at the end of every dance school year. Perhaps his most memorable recital was in 1979 when he presented “The Wiz is a Wow.” Although it was adapted from

the Broadway musical, “The Wiz is a Wow” was a rambunctious reflection of Frank’s sense of obligation to his childhood community and his love of dance. This dance recital featured a full live orchestra with musicians from New York City, professional lighting design, and his students performing songs and acting – some for the very first time. Anyone who has ever seen a Hatchett School of the Performing Arts show in Springfield knows how much of Frank’s professional experience had been passed on to his students. After presenting “The Wiz is a Wow”, Frank went on to present other dance recitals with a Broadway theme: “Brown Sugar on Broadway” and “From Broadway to Hollywood.” Frank’s final dance recital held in Springfield, took place in 1984, when he closed The Frank Hatchett Center for the Performing Arts to focus his attention full time to the Hines-Hatchett Studio in New York City, which he co-owned with Maurice Hines (The Hines-Hatchett Studio would later be re-named Broadway Dance Center). No one taught jazz dance quite like Frank Hatchett. His mixed-influence technique, branded as VOP®, was successful because it was built off of Frank’s character – vibrant, earnest and genuine. That, combined with his dedication to performance quality, allowed him to pull the best from his students. VOP® is not an acronym, but a sound that Frank used to pull energy from his students bodies. “VOP® was something that came out of me, like five, six, seven, eight, VOP®! It’s something that’s left in the room after the applause dies down, when the audience is still patting their feet or shaking their heads.” – (Frank Hatchett) Entertainers, students and dance teachers from all over the world have studied under Frank Hatchett at Broadway Dance Studio in New York City. In addition, he was a featured Master Teacher at such events as “The Annual Jazz Dance World Congress.” Aside from teaching, Mr. Hatchett has choreographed for all aspects of the entertainment industry. ABC’s “Good Morning America” dubbed him “The Doctor of Jazz” and CNBC’s television documentary, “Real Stories” featured a series on Frank, which later won an Emmy Award. Mr. Hatchett has also been featured on MTV’s “The Real World”, and VH1’s “Driven”. In 2000, Frank

Hatchett and former student Nancy Myers-Gitlin co-authored the popular book entitled "Frank Hatchett's Jazz Dance". In 2002, Mr. Hatchett was honored as one of the recipients of the Fred Astaire awards. Mr. Hatchett was twice honored by receiving The Key to The City of Springfield. Most recently, Mr. Hatchett received The 2013 Lifetime Achievement Award from Dance Teacher Magazine. Dancer, Choreographer, Teacher, Mentor, Author, Humanitarian, Father-Figure, Friend, Cousin, Nephew, Uncle, Brother and Son ~ Frank Hatchett wore many hats and had an enormous heart and passion for dance. Mr. Hatchett's tireless efforts have earned him worldwide recognition, and students who have benefited from the heart and soul of a phenomenal choreographer. Mr. Hatchett was the tree trunk for many of his students, his fathering, mentoring and life coaching has branched over many generations. Mr. Hatchett earned his worldwide following through hard-work, dedication, perseverance, and the commitment that he made in 1967, which was to develop and nurture the potential that he saw in students throughout the world, in the art of dance. A memorial service will be held on January 3, 2014 from 5 to 8 p.m. at Progressive Community Baptist Church. New England Funeral & Cremation Center, LLC, 25 Mill Street, Springfield, MA has been entrusted with the arrangements. Visit www.nefcc.net

Tribute Wall

LH

“ *My condolences to Frank's family and friends. He gave so much to the community and his name will be mentioned for many, many years to come. He was one of a kind and will be missed by so many. RIP.*

Lesley Haynes - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

RM

“ *I am very sorry for your loss. Frank was a great teacher and a great person. He left this world a better place, and me a better man. God Bless*

Robert \"Bob\" McCollum - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

MM

“ *My condolences and prayers goes out to the family.*

Mary Maddox - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

LR

“ *I was 12 years old when I first stepped in Frank Hachett's dance studio. I was not the best dancer, but my memories of being a formal dancer will always be with me. RIP PAPA FRANK*

Lisa Richardson - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

CP

“ I know for certain that we never lose the people we love, even to death. They continue to participate in every act, thought and decision we make. Their love leaves an indelible imprint in our memories. Find comfort in knowing that your life has been enriched by having shared their love.\n\nOur thoughts and prayers are with Frank Hatchett’s family and friends during this difficult time.\n\nThe Pantoja Family

Carolyn "Kayel" Pantoja - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

KO

“ My family and I would like to send condolences to the family of "Uncle Frank". May the good Lord mend your hearts and fill you with everlasting joy.\n\nI to had experienced being taught dance as a little girl in the Springfield Dunbar Community Center. Uncle Frank had the best teachers in that studio. My mother still has the video of me and my sister dancing in our Indian costumes. You will forever be missed, thank you for the opportunity to dance.\n\nKiara Oliver and family

Kiara Oliver - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

RO

“ Frank was my teacher, my second father, my mentor, one of my greatest inspirations, and most of all my friend. The profound impact that he had upon my life and so many others is immeasurable. He called us his children, because we were his mission in life. One that he had dedicated to the cultural and artistic education of every student that he touched. A great deal of who I am and who I have become is in part because of Frank his unwavering love, faith and encouragement. I had been his assistant, one of his principal dancer, sometimes his replacement in New York and one of his teachers at the Dunbar in Springfield and forever one of his kids. Rest In Peace Frank and know that a part of you lives on inside of us. Ricky

Rick Odums - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

WH

“ *Heaven has another choreographer for the angels...this is going to be one ole piece of choreography for the saints.....Dance*

Willie Hinton - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

VJ

“ *Mr. Frank Hatchett was a very pleasant person. Growing up at the Dunbar Community Center, I had the pleasure of knowing and growing with him. He will be truly missed. Gone but not forgotten. God bless The Hatchett Family.*

Vernon Emanuel Jr. - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

DB

“ *FRANK WAS A LEADER, AND A MAN THAT LOVED DANCE AND THEATER , HE LOVED SEE GOALS HIS STUDENTS ACHIEVED !!!\r\nHE WILL BE MISSED BY MANY IN THE UNITED STATES AND ABROAD.\r\nREST IN PEACE, ABSENT IN THE BODY PRESENT WITH THE\ " LORD\ "*

Deborah Boyd - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

RH

“ *You will truly be missed by many. Your legacy will continue to live and bless many others through dance. My condolences and prayers go out to the family.*

Renay Harris Hardy - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

JS

“ *I remember those Saturdays in the BIG room like yesterday! You are loved and will be missed by so many. R.I.P. \ "Papa\ " Frank- 5,6,7,8 VOP!*

Judy T. Scott - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

MS

“ Thanks to Frank's family for sharing your love one. My sincere condolences.

Mable L. Sharif - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

AW

“ Condolences

Anthony Wright - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

TW

“ WONDERFUL PERSON.

TED WILLIAMS - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

MB

“ My heart and prayers go out to the Frank Hatchett dancers from the 413, and around the World for the loss of a great person, May God continue to comfort you at this time...God Bless you....DD

Ms Mia Black - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

PM

“ You will be missed. My you be blessed.

Paula Mireku - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

DT

“ I only danced with Frank for two years. Not many people remember me because I was very skinny and extremely shy and awkward. I thought Frank never even noticed me until he told my mom that I had great potential. (Think maybe mommy just said that to make me feel better). However, one of my proudest moments was dancing in the Recital held at Springfield Technical High School. I never got the chance to thank Mr. Hatchett. I hope he senses my gratitude now. My thoughts and prayers are with his family. R.I.P. Mr. Hatchett.

Dee (Hubbard) Thorne - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

CC

“ We have truly lost a legend. I spent a few years at the Dunbar and was fortunate to have been a student of Frank Hatchett's. May he rest in peace...Gone but NEVER WILL BE FORGOTTEN !

Crystal Craigwell - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

NS

“ Thank you Frank for all that you have done. It was a pleasure having you as a friend and teacher. May you forever RIP.

Norma J Skeene - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

AH

“ I would like to express my condolences to the Hatchett Family at this time at the lost of, Mr. Frank Hatchtt, The Master of Dance. He was a Magnificent Dance Instructor, who captured the imagination of his students, and audiences alike with such creativity and wit surpassed by very few. As one of the long list of drummers, and dancers that knew, and loved Frank he will be greatly missed -
Andre Halfide Drummer

Andre Halfide - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

BA

“ I never was⁸⁵⁴ a student of Mr. Frank Hackett, but I have so much respect and love for him as a person and his influence in the lives of so many of my fellow Spfld, Ma. friends. He will be missed by many. I remember he gave my oldest sister her first job. Thanks Frank.

Bilal Ahmed - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

SF

“ Rest in peace Frank. Thanks for the beautiful memories. Xoxo

Sylvia Fiore - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

MM

“ I had headphones on \"wknd\", too afraid my dad thought i was gay, it was my burn to dance. My dad died, my real dad appeared. Just as hard, made me cry too, difference, he loved me, told me he loved, me. \r\nMark, Morris

Mark Morris - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

MM

“ I was afraid to dance, so i snuck headphones, and soul train saturdays, i felt the burn. From my dad. \r\nThank god for tammy, she brought me to, my mentor.

Mark Morris - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

JT

“ One of the greatest!\r\n\r\nDeepest sympathies to the family!

Joe Tremaine - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

“ I am honored to have known Frank, worked with him on occasion and most importantly VOPPED with him at his studios. So much energy and wonderful support he gave to us all. What a gift to have been a small part of his legacy. God bless and keep his sweet soul and glove to all family and friends! Ringo Frank, Go!!!!

Carol Maillard - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

“Frank was an amazing man whom will be sadly missed. He was so humble and yet so talented. He has opened doors for African American Dance and Theater Arts schools here in Springfield and beyond. He is a legend who has influenced me a great deal. Dance in Heaven Frank!”

Benjamin D. Smith - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

[illegible]

TinaMarie Holland - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

“ I was out of town and unable to attend the services. Frank was the father I never had. He will always have a special place in my heart. He was a true Angel.”

Darlene D. Bryant-Francis - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

DD

“ I was so saddened when I heard of my dear friend Frank's passing. I had a lasting friendship with him for over 35 years, and I will miss my monthly phone calls with him that lasted hours. I will miss the way only he could say my name. I will miss his smile, laughter but most of all his heart. He was not only one of the greatest teachers but also one of the greatest human beings. You were loved by me and so many. You will always have a place in my heart. To your wonderful family, my thoughts and prayers are with all of you. Debbi Dee.

Debbi Dee - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

DS

“ Mr Hatchett was a wonderful teacher and human being. I took many classes from him in Springfield and at Dance Olympus as a child and many more classes with my own students in NYC at the Broadway Dance center. He will be missed more than words can say.

Diane Scouras - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

JL

“ May your memory be eternal. \n\n\nJenny Logus

Jenny Logus - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

ML

“ The day I stepped into Franks class was one of My best . He was the King. There was no other Dance teacher like Frank in the world. I am deeply saddened by His passing. God bless You Frank. Maggie Elliott Lyons

maggie lyons - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

PB

“ I just found out my former dance teacher passed away. I took lessons in the 1970s with him. He had the best personality & was a better teacher. He taught my friend Lauren & I semi private lessons. My heartfelt condolences to all that knew & loved him such as I did. God bless him & may he dance in the heavens..... RIP Frank H 1 of the best that was. The world will miss your dancing, personality & friendship.

Patsy Brittain - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

ST

“ From the earth to the sky..... You were one of a kind. I have great memories of Frank. He was a great mentor to the Venettes and influenced our lives. We all loved to dance with him in Boston! He will be missed.

Suzie Tekosky-Banks - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

AM

“ My condolences on the loss of this wonderful man, bright spirit, generous heart. I took classes with the legendary Frank Hatchett in the 80's in NYC and he brought a world of fun, creativity, excitement, and sheer joy to my life. I remember him giving me, one of his lowliest students, a kiss on the cheek after class one day. He was so spontaneous and generous of spirit. God bless him.

Andrea Malkiewicz - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

MM

“ Frank Hatchett played a pivotal role in my dance career, and he will forever be remembered with love and appreciation. He was choreographer for 2 Cameo music videos I danced in, *Attack Me With Your Love* and *Single Life*. We filmed part of them inside of Studio 54 in NYC...such great memories of a great man! God Bless Frank, I am sure he is choreographing the Angels in Heaven!

Marjorie Mann - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

RW

“ A naive and often scared little boy I was when I first moved to NYC many moons ago. Dance had always given me a great amount of peace, so I sought out a class to release and be reminded of the joy of life. Taking Mr. Hatchett's class actually gave me the courage to \"keep on keepin on\" in a big strange city that sometimes proved cruel. Dance, as delivered by him, allowed me to actually see the sunnier side of things in my new home. 21 years later, I'm still grateful for this man's joy.

Robert West - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

JB

“ You are greatly missed . Star Power winner Charles Ferbee and Janet Gregg

Janet Brown - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

NC

“ I stumbled upon my grandmothers Marguerite Roberto’s yearbook and all my just happened to find your grandfather I was looking up many names and it seems that your grandfather has done a lot of cool stuff so I I just really wanted to show you this picture in the yearbook in the message she wrote for my grandmother so am I just thought that would be interesting for you guys and sorry for your loss even if it was so long ago he seems like a really cool guy God bless you

nick codianni - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM

ER

“ May this internal candle forever stay lit by the love people have for you. Rest in peace Cousin Frank\r\n\r\nLove your cousin H.R.H Princess Elizabeth

Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Renoldi - February 14, 2023 at 10:26 AM