

## Aikens Funeral Home

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### Walter Lee Gibbons

"Dirk"

(October 13, 1928 - July 24, 2015)

Homegoing Services for Mr. Walter Lee Gibbons "Dirk" of Tampa who passed away Friday, July 24, 2015 will be held Saturday, August 8th 11:00 a.m. at Rivers of Life Church Ministries, 301 N. Lakewood, Brandon, Florida, Rev. Curtis A. Swafford, pastor with Rev. Michael McDaniels officiating and Minister Walter Duane Gibbons,



eulogist. The interment will follow. Walter was born on October 13, 1928 to the late Abraham and Minnie Lee Gibbons in Tampa and was reared in Ybor City. He attended Middleton High School and was a former Negro Baseball League pitcher. In 1943 he was the pitcher for the Pepsi Cola Juniors, the Pepsi Cola Giants in 1944 and the Tampa Rockets in 1945, until he was called to play in the Negro League. Walter first played in the Negro League with Indianapolis and Baltimore (1946-1949) and went on to play in Canada as a pitcher in the ManDak League for the Brandon Grays (1949-1950). While playing in Canada he picked up the nickname "Bubble Gum" because he would chew gum and blow bubbles while on the mound. He had a remarkable 1949 season: he won 19, lost 5 and had 229 strikeouts. Walter was drafted in the 1950's into the U.S. Army and served in the Korean War (1950-1953) on the 3rd infantry division based out of Ft. Riley in Kansas. After his service ended he returned to Manitoba, Canada to play baseball with the Winnipeg Giants in 1953. He returned to Brandon Grays in ManDak, Canada in 1954 and finally the Minot Mallards of North Dakota, Canada (1955-1957). In the 1990's he was honored at a Tampa Bay Rays game and threw the opening pitch. Walter is in the Negro League Baseball Hall of Fame in Kansas City and in June of 2006, he was inducted into the Manitoba baseball Hall of Fame in Canada. In 2009 the Major League Baseball association held a "Mock Draft" in Orlando at the Wide World of Sports Arena and each MLB team drafted a Negro League Baseball player. The Tampa Bay Rays drafted Walter Lee Gibbons "Dirk". Walter was a long time employee with the University of Tampa and was currently employed at the time of his passing. He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers, Henry and John Gibbons; niece, Vida Cole; and his dear son, Jorge Ricardo "Ricky" Gibbons. He leaves to cherish his memories; daughter, Celeste

Charise Gibbons-Peoples (husband Jeff); son, Walter Duane Gibbons (wife Cheryl); grandchildren, Gino Penalver Gibbons (fiancé Jenna), Garrett Douglas Gibbons, Terrell and Chris Peoples; great grandson, Calvin Peoples; sister in law, Idella Tyler; special daughter, Loretta Bethea; former spouse of 29 years, mother of his children and devoted friend forever, Agustina Penalver Gibbons; cousins, Romeo Cole, Olga-Villada Barnes, Alfred Barnes III, Zane L.V. Barnes, Mercedes Grey, Arturo Villada Jr., Loretta Cunningham, Dalia Planchett, Evelio Penalver, Betty Brooks, Julie Swain, Onelia Hammond-Whitlow, Larry Planchett, Rhonda Robinson, Hattie Robinson; friends and co-workers, Jerome Fulton, Henry Henly, Billy Reed, Clifford Brown, Raydell “Bo” Maddox, Clifford Robinson, Neil and Carol Armstrong, Walter and Ronald Bethea, Ezell Carneige, Leon and Sharon Rolle, the Young family; A very special thank you to, Pastor Curtis A. Swafford, Rivers of Life Church family, Spring Hill MB Church, Pastor Eugene Garnett, The City of Tampa Purchasing Dept., the University of Tampa family, The Manitoba Baseball Hall of Fame, Tampa Bay Rays, the staff at TGH, St. Joseph, Manor Care Rehab Center, Melech Hospice Autum Team, Aikens Funeral Home; and a host of other family and friends. The visitation will be held at Aikens Funeral Home on Friday, August 7th, from 5-8 p.m. The family will receive friends from 5-6 p.m. The friends and family are asked to meet at the church at 10:45 a.m. Saturday for the service.

[Back](#)