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In Memoriam: Arthur Lee Royster, 1949-2013

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In Memoriam

Arthur Lee Royster

1949-2013



Arthur Lee Royster.

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Arthur Lee Royster was born in Richmond, Virginia, in 1949 and reborn in Boston in 2009. He moved to the city to rejoin his sister Shirley. She and her in-laws took him in. Arthur found a job in food service at Boston University and joined Grace Church of All Nations in Dorchester. He was an eager participant in a monthly floating card party where bid whist is the main game on the second Saturday night each month. He loved to play pinochle even more and taught others the card game.

Many of his fellow parishioners and card players did not know about Arthur's past. His family and the food service provider at BU did. Arthur was an ex-offender. He had served 20 years in Virginia prison. His pastor, Bishop A. L. Foxworth, had no idea about his past. Fellow card players who learned about it were astonished because Arthur was so easygoing, caring, and friendly. Some in-laws were initially nervous about him coming to Boston but got over it quickly once he arrived. He volunteered information about his criminal past to Aramark even though the food service provider for BU would not have learned of his out-of-state conviction through the CORI, the Massachusetts Criminal Offender Record Information Act.

Arthur was a model of successful reentry. The last four years of his life reflected several findings of this issue of the *Trotter Review*. He found and kept employment. He rose to being a chef with supervisory responsibility at a BU dining hall. He was involved in a church. Arthur had not been interested in religion when approached while incarcerated, but he came around before he was released. At Grace Church, he was active in Bible Study, Men's Choir, and Men's Fellowship. "I know he had a divine makeover," Bishop Foxworth said at Arthur's memorial service in the church. Social support came from his sister, in-laws, and friends he made at the card parties. He gave back, too. Arthur was an active volunteer in the alumni committee of Span, Inc., which provides services to ex-offenders. In September 2012, Arthur attended the "Life After Prison" forum at the Boston Center for the Arts. Kenneth J. Cooper, editor of the *Trotter Review*, offered Arthur a ride home. It was only then that Cooper learned the fellow card player had served time in prison.

On April 7, 2013, Arthur Lee Royster died at home in Dorchester, four months after being diagnosed with liver cancer. His remains were cremated.