



GALLERY OF DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS INDUCTEE 2011

VIRGIL WARE, the third child born to James and Lorine Ware, was riding on the handlebars of a bicycle near Docena Road on Sept. 15, 1963 when he was shot by white teens who had just attended a segregationist rally. He was the sixth child killed on that day of racial tension and destruction in the Birmingham area.

As he and his brother traveled back toward their home near Pratt City, they were unaware that four little girls had been killed in the horrific bombing of 16th Street Baptist Church or that Johnny Robinson had been shot and killed on the north side of town by a white police officer.

Two Eagle Scouts -- Michael Lee Farley and Larry Joe Sims-- returning home after attending a segregationist rally in Midfield saw Virgil and his brother James on the bicycle. Sims confessed to firing a shot from a .22 caliber handgun, striking Virgil.

An all-white jury convicted Sims of second-degree manslaughter and Farley later pleaded guilty to the same offense. Both teens were sentenced to seven months in jail for Ware's death.

Before the gunshot claimed his life, Ware was a student at Sandusky Elementary School. He enjoyed school and was an A student who played tight end on the football team. He also loved church and family members remember how young Virgil would often stand on the steps of St. Luke Baptist Church in Pratt City, singing and praying.

Born December 6, 1949, Virgil Ware was 13.