



Erby Gene Fondren

April 6, 1941 - December 5, 2025

Erby Gene Fondren began his life on April 6, 1941 in Sardis, Mississippi, when the Lord blessed his parents, Mr. & Mrs. Leonard and Lillie Jane (Hubbard) Fondren, with their 8th of what would ultimately be 11 angels.

Erby, affectionally known as “Bay-Bay,” accepted Christ as a young teen and was baptized while attending Viney Creek Church. He attended Walter Chapel High School but left in tenth grade to support the family by working in the cotton fields and later at the Salt Mill.

At the age of 18, in Sardis, he met and fell in love with 16-year-old Margaret Rockett, whom he described as the prettiest girl he’d ever seen, and pursued her relentlessly, occasionally, knocking a few guys out who got in the way. They married two years later and from this union had three children, Brenda, Neugene and Tony.

As a young family man with a strong desire for a better life and more opportunities, he bravely set off for up North to Chicago where his elder brothers, Andrew and John lived, to seek employment. He was quickly blessed with a job at Libby, McNeill & Libby Company (Libby’s) as a cook. He immediately sent for his family and began a new life in Chicago.

Bay-Bay was a hard worker, ambitious and naturally gifted in car repair and

quickly became the “unofficial” family mechanic. In 1985, he and his brother, Andrew, dreamed of opening their own mechanic’s shop, but unfortunately Andrew would be called home to be with the Lord before this goal could be realized. Bay-Bay also had unique and creative skills for fixing anything, often dismantling and tinkering for hours on various devices and appliances, making him a resourceful handyman. Although, he would subsequently retire from Libby’s, he would briefly work at Nabisco post-retirement.

Bay-Bay truly embraced life and lived it to the fullest. He loved his wife, was a great provider, loving father, role model, favorite uncle to many, loyal friend, and just a popular, well-liked guy. He loved cars, nature, road trips, birds, music and truly valued spending time with family and friends and hosting his famous “must-go-to” basement house parties. People really enjoyed being in his company. Once you stepped into “Club Bay-Bay,” you were guaranteed a great time, dancing, laughing, eating, caught candidly in photographs, listening to his corny jokes and sayings, “and just being enveloped in his love as you grooved to the Blues and R&B.

In his senior years, after spinal surgery, he lost his mobility to walk independently and was predominately in a power wheelchair. Although frustrated with his condition, he regularly praised God for over 80 years of life, which allowed him to see great grandchildren, the first black president, and the advancement of technology among many other things.

He found solace and peace listening to his gospel and blues music, watching television game shows and feeding the birds that would fly to his balcony daily and nibble on the buffet he’d leave for them. He often said that if the dish was empty when they came, he’d see them looking through the patio door for him, waiting to be fed. This gave him much delight. Often your arrival to his home would be met with the blasting of Gospel or the Blues from his radio or television. He truly was grateful to see 84 years.

Erby Gene Fondren, 84, "Bay-Bay" left us peacefully from his home on December 5, 2025, from complications of pneumonia. A beloved father, husband, uncle, and friend will always, always be remembered fondly.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Margaret (still the prettiest girl); his daughter, Brenda "TayLar" Fondren; Sons, Neugene (Eleanor) Fondren and Tony Terrell (Regina) Fondren; Grandchildren, Candice Cherelle Anderson, Brandon Allen Anderson, DaMario Fondren, Teyana Fondren, Tierra Desiree Fondren, Lasinto Davis; Bonus Grandchildren, Gabrielle Kelly Hunt, Giselle Hunt, Ariaahn Hunt, Blair Cox and Cesario Cox; Great Grandchildren, Skylar Marie Matthews, Desirae Kameelah Anderson and Micah Lee William Applewhite; Brother, Clarence (Georgia) Fondren, Sister-in-law, Marilyn (Albert) Fondren, Nieces Joyce, Lillian, and Iglovia; Nephew, Monroe, Bonus son, William Anderson (CW), along with a host of other nieces, nephews, cousins, friends and family.

Erby was preceded in death by his parents, Leonard & Lillie Jane Fondren; Brothers, Andrew Fondren, Wesley Lee Fondren, John Erby Fondren, Elbert Fondren, Robert Fondren, Albert Fondren; Sisters, Betty Jean Washington, Lenerene Thomas and Hazelteen Gipson and beloved Grandsons: William Allen Anderson, III and Baby Elijah Fondren.

Cemetery Details

Homewood Memorial Gardens

600 Ridge Rd
Homewood, IL 60430

Previous Events

Public Viewing

DEC **20**. 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM (CT)

Calahan Funeral Home Landmark Chapel
7030 S. Halsted
Chicago, IL 60621

Visitation

DEC **21**. 1:30 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Calahan Funeral Home - Legacy Center
7046 S. Halsted
Chicago, IL 60621

Funeral Service

DEC **21**. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CT)

Calahan Funeral Home - Legacy Center
7046 S. Halsted
Chicago, IL 60621

Burial/Interment

DEC **22**. 12:00 PM - 12:30 PM (CT)

Homewood Memorial Gardens
600 Ridge Rd
Homewood, IL 60430

Tribute Wall



“ *Eleanor M.Fondren lit a candle in memory of Erby Gene Fondren* ”



Eleanor M.Fondren - December 20, 2025 at 12:27 PM