



Charles D. McKinney, 92, of Ayer

November 8, 1933 - May 15, 2026

AYER: Charles D. McKinney, lovingly known throughout the community as “Mack,” passed away peacefully on Friday, May 15, 2026, at the age of 92. A devoted husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, veteran, public servant, mentor, and man of unwavering conviction, Charles lived a life defined by faith, family, courage, service, and purpose.

Born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on November 8, 1933, to Andrew and Selena (Faulkner) McKinney, Charles later made Ayer, Massachusetts, his home for more than fifty years, where his impact on the community would become historic and far-reaching.

To the town he served, he was “Mack.” To his family, he was more than Mack — he was “Dad,” “Daddy Mack,” “Grandpa,” and “Pop Pop.” In his later years, as a respected elder in the church and community, he was lovingly known by many as “Pop McKinney.”

Charles stood tall, proud, and kind — a fierce protector with a commanding presence and an even bigger heart. Deeply committed to making a difference, he dedicated his life to the military, government, and civil service. He loved his country deeply and served the people of the United States with all of his might.

His distinguished career began with his enlistment in the United States Army, where he faithfully served for 16 years. He retired in 1966 as a Non-Commissioned Officer at the rank of Sergeant Specialist First Class (SP5). His military service included assignments in Germany and Korea, as well as highly specialized work in intelligence and security through the U.S. Army Security Agency at Fort Devens, Massachusetts. During his service, Charles worked as an Instructor in Intelligence and Security, conducting courses in communications and electronic security for Army, Air Force, and Naval personnel. He also planned security workshops and helped implement ongoing counseling and professional development programs for new instructors. Prior to retirement, Charles received the National Defense Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, along with several additional commendations honoring his dedicated service.

Following his honorable discharge, Charles pursued higher education under the G.I. Bill, earning a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from the University of Lowell in 1972. He later earned a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Northeastern University in 1974.

Charles continued his life of service as Deputy Regional Community Service Representative for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and later as Branch Chief for the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights in Boston. He also devoted time to the Lowell Branch of the NAACP Legal Redress Committee, advocating for justice and equality in his community.

A trailblazer in local government, Charles became the first Black Town Selectman in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts when he won election in Ayer in 1990, serving two terms with distinction. He later served five years as a Commissioner on the Devens Enterprise Commission, helping guide the planning and development of the Devens community project.

Charles also devoted himself to faith and fellowship. He was an active and respected member of the Masonic community, including the Crispus Attucks Lodge and the Prince Hall Grand Lodge, where he achieved the distinction of Most Worshipful Master and later attained the honorable rank of 33rd Degree Mason. He also faithfully served as an Elder of New Hope Community Church in Ayer.

Yet beyond his titles and accomplishments, Charles will be remembered most deeply for the man he was within his family.

His grandchildren and great-grandchildren remember him as “so much fun.” He won their hearts over and over again with humor, storytelling, and unforgettable moments that became family legend. He would perform his Donald Duck voice to make the children laugh, tell generations of grandchildren there was “a lion in the basement” — a story many fully believed — and encourage them to be brave with advice like, “Be careful, but do it again.”

He taught his family the values of hard work, excellence, discipline, and self-sufficiency. One of his favorite sayings was, “God bless the child who’s got his own.”

He was firm, consistent, knowledgeable, supportive, forgiving, and at times strict — but always deeply loving in his own way. His love often showed itself through protection and presence. Family members still laugh remembering the time he answered the door holding a shotgun when his daughter Carole began dating, or when he proudly introduced one of Zaharah’s former boyfriends to his gun collection.

At home, Charles found joy in the simple things: family gatherings, summertime barbecues, projects in the garage, mornings spent eating corned beef hash, and evenings falling asleep in front of the History Channel after being the first one awake each day. His grandchildren fondly remember summers at his home, being fed Oatnut cereal — which many still jokingly insist was “disgusting” — and feeding chipmunks with him at 50 Cambridge Street, reflecting his respect and appreciation for animals and nature alike.

He was fearless and encouraged those around him to face life boldly. He gave unsolicited advice freely, never hid his opinions, and somehow left people better for having listened.

Above all else, what gave Charles joy was God, family, and service.

His beloved wife, Julia M. (Owens) McKinney, who passed away in January 2013, remained the love of his life. Their marriage taught their family what it meant to fight for love unapologetically. Julia was the calm to Charles’ fire, and he loved her with every part of his being. No matter what life brought, he never left her side until her final breath.

In his later years, Charles was lovingly cared for and deeply cherished by his devoted companion, Christine Anderson, who stood faithfully by his side for the last eight years of his life. The McKinney family is profoundly grateful for the love, patience, care, and companionship she gave him. Through that bond, Christine and her family became an extension of the McKinney family, embracing Charles as their own, just as they, in turn, were embraced and loved by his family.

When reflecting on his life, Charles would often say, “I did the best I could with what I had.”

And indeed he did.

Though imperfect, as all men are, his family agrees on one truth above all: they have never known a greater man.

Charles leaves behind four surviving children: Charles D. McKinney, Brian Neal McKinney, William D. Grady and his loving wife, Marilyn and Carole R. Herbert. He also leaves fourteen beloved grandchildren — Kwayne, Myesha, Omar, Zaharah, Suad, Nuriyya, Nadia, Jordan, Latonya, William, Aleah, Nyvette, Shanell, and Natasha — along with 19 cherished great-grandchildren.

He was predeceased by his son, Kevin McKinney of New York City; his daughter, Tanya Lynn McKinney; and his brothers Andrew McKinney, Stanley McKinney, and William McKinney.

Family and friends are invited to the calling hours from 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM on Saturday, May 30, 2026, at New Hope Community Church, 139 Sandy Pond Road, Ayer, Massachusetts. A Masonic Service will begin at 10:30 AM, followed by funeral services at 11:00 AM. Interment will follow at Woodlawn Cemetery.

The Anderson Funeral Home is assisting the family with arrangements.

Cemetery Details

Woodlawn Cemetery

Harvard Road
Ayer, MA 01432
info@andersonfuneral.com

Previous Events

Calling Hours

MAY 30. 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

New Hope Community Church
139 Sandy Pond Rd.
Ayer, MA 01432

Masonic Service

MAY 30. 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

New Hope Community Church
139 Sandy Pond Rd.
Ayer, MA 01432

Funeral Service

MAY 30. 11:00 AM (ET)

New Hope Community Church
139 Sandy Pond Rd.
Ayer, MA 01432

Tribute Wall

NG

“ *N.P.C.C. Bible study group purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Charles D. McKinney, 92, of Ayer.*



N.P.C.C. Bible study group - May 24 at 06:37 PM

KF

“ *Kenneth and Twanna Mahoney and family purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Charles D. McKinney, 92, of Ayer.*



Kenneth and Twanna Mahoney and family - May 24 at 11:27 AM

KF

“ *Kenneth and Twanna Mahoney and family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Charles D. McKinney, 92, of Ayer.*

Kenneth and Twanna Mahoney and family - May 24 at 11:27 AM

LG

“ Rest peacefully Daddy Mack. I will miss you dearly. Our long conversations and times spent together at the kitchen table or living room. I will remember as a child sleeping over on 50 Cambridge St. in the afternoons you would be in the garage doing projects that usually had you using the table saw. I would always come outside and ask you for the rope that hung tied up on the wall. You said I could have it as long as I knew how to wrap it back up. You showed me how to use my arm to fold the rope, and always put it back how I found it. You taught me the importance of taking care of your things and from then on how to care for my vehicles and other things around the house. You let me use scrap wood and hammer and nails to be creative. I appreciate the lessons, the love, the laughter and support. Love always, LaTonya



LaTonya Grady - May 23 at 01:01 AM

MA

Rest in peace mr mack you were always kind to me and my family Montgomery

Maravia - May 24 at 01:53 PM

CG

“ Christine , your special girl purchased the Rose Garden Heart for the family of Charles D. McKinney, 92, of Ayer.



Christine , your special girl - May 22 at 04:34 PM



“ *Christine , your special girl planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Charles D. McKinney, 92, of Ayer.*

Christine , your special girl - May 22 at 04:34 PM