

## Robert "Benny" Woodson

Benny, as he was known to many, graduated from Las Plumas High School (LPHS) in 1963, the first graduating class ever at LPHS. Benny was an outstanding athlete lettering in football and track, as well as being a member of Block LP all four years. He was captain of the football team as a junior and senior, and was the leading scorer in Northern California scoring 116 points in his final year at LPHS and 44 points in his final game against Placer. He was also named to the Northern California All-Star Team his senior year. A quote from the 1963 LPHS Yearbook, *"In recognition of his leadership and scholastic abilities, he was elected president of the Sierra Foothill League as a junior."* Benny ended his athletic career at LPHS setting a school record 10.1 in the 100-yard dash. Active in Student Body activities, Benny was on the school newspaper staff as a senior and was Boys State Representative.

While in high school, Benny earned the nickname "Mr. Fix-It Man", as he helped people fix anything they had that was not working. He was always ready to help anyone in need.

Upon graduation from LPHS Benny attended Sierra College in Rocklin and played football in the 1963 season. He was then offered a full academic/athletic scholarship to the University of Utah, the first for an African-American student at that university. 1966 was his best season as he was second in the Western Athletic Conference (WAC) in rushing attempts, rushing yards and plays from scrimmage. In his three seasons there he played in 31 games scoring 18 rushing touchdowns and two receiving, and played in the 1964 Liberty Bowl, with the Utes beating West Virginia in Atlantic City, NJ by a score of 32-6. This was the first major Bowl game ever played indoors and broadcast nation-wide.

Benny's collegiate career both athletically and academically ended in 1967 with his earning his Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Business Administration. He then went on to earn his Master of Arts (MA) degree in Recreational Therapy also at University of Utah.

With his BA degree in hand, Benny drew interest from National Football League (NFL) scouts, and in 1967 was drafted by the Oakland Raiders in the 15<sup>th</sup> round as the 384<sup>th</sup> overall pick. He opted to play for the Canadian Football League (CFL) where he was a member of the Calgary Stampeders for one year, carrying the ball 85 times for 401 yards. He also had 24 receptions for 200 yards and one touchdown. Unfortunately, he suffered a knee injury ending his football career.

While working on his MA degree back in Utah, he opened the first Boys and Girls Club of Salt Lake City, being the first African-American to do so. Benny was a very strong voice for the underserved kids living in this city. While in Salt Lake City, he also owned a bar and barbeque restaurant called Mr. Goodtimes as well as a construction company. His adult life also saw him owning a Harley Davidson Motorcycle Shop, working as a Real Estate Broker, brakeman for Georgia Pacific Railroad and a scout for the San Francisco 49ers professional football team. He also ran for Mayor of Salt Lake City in the 1972 primary, but was not elected.

Benny returned to Oroville sometime during the late 1970's to early 1980's and continued his association with the Boys and Girls Club and it is believed the club was handed off to the Oroville YMCA.

Quote from Benny's Obituary, *"(Agape as he was often called by family and friends) was also known for his humor and generosity. At a moment's notice, he would readily assist those in need. This often took the form of giving the clothes off his back, even the shoes off his feet, as well as feeding friend or strangers."*

Benny's aunt, Sally Childs Walker-Glaude, writes in her support letter, *"Robert "Benny" Woodson, my dearly beloved nephew, was such a unique person. He truly took an interest in all that he met. He had a nickname which was "Agape". Everybody knew him by that name. It means love- like the love of Christ Jesus. Benny was a beautiful personality. He was a helper."*

Benny's Life Quote and Firm Belief: *"If you have a brain, use it!" It's all you need to overcome any problem."*

Benny passed away on January 6, 2017. His tombstone is a football field with him carrying a football in the center with the words: Robert "Benny" Woodson at the top and Kickoff: August 15, 1945 and Touchdown: January 6, 2017 at the bottom.