—Bethune

Continued from Page 6

school for girls in Concord, NC. Mary spent seven years there, graduating in 1894.

The times were difficult for blacks in the South. Filibusters by Southerners in Congress and Supreme Court rulings blocked efforts to confer certain civil rights on them. Two years after Mary finished high school, the Plessy V. Ferguson decision locked the "separate but equal" doctrine into the law.

But Mary had love and hope. And, apparently one of the biggest doses of determination ever seen.

And Mary was determined that other black children were going to have an opportunity to learn too.

In October, 1904, she opened the Bethune Industrial School for Girls in Daytona Beach, FLA. She had six students, five girls who paid 50 cents a week for tuition and her son, Albert. Mrs. Bethune subsidized her school's income by training the young students to sing. They became known as the Bethune Choral Group and were greeted enthusiastically wherever they performed.

She also sold pies, scrounged furnishings from the trash piles of resort hotels, spoke at functions, solicited donations door-to-door and whatever else was necessary to keep her school's doors open.

Today, that little school is Bethune - Cookman College.

The "specialness" of Mary McLeod Bethune became noticed nationally.

U.S. President Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover appointed her to commissions to advise them on child welfare. And, in 1936, President Franklin D. Roosevelt named her the first black woman to be director of a division of the National Youth Administration. She served for eight years.

During that time she also was special adviser to President Roosevelt for Minority Affairs and advised the Secretary of War on the selection process for a training program for women officers.

In 1944, she was one of three black consultants to the United States delegation that framed the United Nations charter.

But perhaps the accomplishment for which Mary McLeod Bethune is best known is her formation in 1935 of the National Council of Negro Women.

Honors abounded for Mary McLeod Bethune during the latter years of her life. She was awarded more than 10 honorary degrees, appointed to boards of directors for businesses and civic and social service agencies.

In 1952, President Truman named her an official U.S. delegate to the second inaugural of President Tubman of Liberia.

The honors continued after her death in 1955. Last summer a U.S. Postal stamp commemorating her was unveiled — making her the eighth black American and only second black woman so honored.

But when Mrs. Bethune sat down in 1955 to plan her last will and testament, it was not the honors on her mind.

She wrote:

"If I have a legacy to leave my people, it is my philosophy of loving and serving ... I pray now that my philosophy may be helpful to those who share my vision of a world of Peace, Progress, Brotherhood and Love."

A May 20, 1901 photograph, donated by Mrs. Mabel Brooks, shows the Religious Work Committee of the Colored YMCA, then located at Druid Hill Ave. and Hoffman St. From left to right are G. A. Goines, secretary; W. H. Murray, president; W. B. Marshall, leader of singing; Charles M. Haskins, secretary; M. B. Mayfield, chairman; Thomas H. Smith and R. N. Matte.

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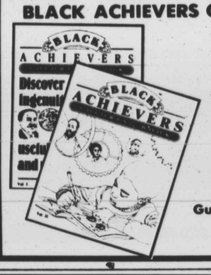

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—Black women

Continued from Page 7

across as just being such an honest, open, wise person with unending resources."

Septima Clark

Mrs. Septima Clark was born in Charleston, South Carolina on May 3, 1898. Mrs. Clark wrote in her autobiography that from her early childhood she wanted to be a schoolteacher. After teaching in Southern public schools for forty years she was fired because of her membership in the NAACP. In 1956 Mrs. Clark took a job at the Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee.

Mrs. Clark was deeply concerned that a large proportion of the black masses could not read or write in the late 1950s. She knew that Southern whites used black illiteracy as an excuse to prevent blacks from voting. Beginning in 1956 she designed an extremely successful grassroot literacy program. She explained that "in '56 and '57 night after night I sat down and wrote out a citizenship education program which would help illiterates to learn to read and write, so they could register to vote."

Her approach was to teach adults based on their own experiences. She taught them how to write their names in the family Bible while others learned to write their sons in the military. She taught people to write words they had sung for years. Sharecroppers were taught mathematics by counting the number of seeds needed for their crops. In a short time the masses were learning to read and write. This was astonishing because the public schools had failed badly in their efforts to teach black adults. Because of it's success, the program quickly spread throughout the South. Local people set up these schools in their own communities with phenomenal success. Once the adults learned to read and write they embarked on a trip to City Hall where they attempted to register to vote.

By 1961 Dr. King had become aware of the success of Mrs. Clark's literacy program. He persuaded her to move the program to the SCLC. Through SCLC Mrs. Clark and her staff were able to teach thousands. These "citizenship schools," as they were called, served as a community organizing base for Dr. King and the movement. Many of the students of these classes became involved in sit-ins, demonstrations, and running for public office. The schools prepared Blacks to listen to people like Dr. King. According to Mrs. Clark, many blacks in the 50s and 60s thought everything white was right. Mrs. Clark's grassroots approach to education has been so successful that it has been used by other countries in Europe and Mexico. But most of all, the efforts of Mrs. Clark paved the way for the strong black electorate evident today. Recently the city of Charleston, South Carolina payed homage to Mrs. Clark by naming a street "Septima Poinsette Clark Drive."

Diane Nash-Bevel

Diane Nash, a Chicago native, arrived at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee in the fall of 1959. At first she was excited about attending the historic black university. However, the walls of Southern racial segregation quickly vanished her excitement. Within a short period of time she grew tired of the fact of being able to go only to three restaurants and one movie theatre.

Within months Ms. Nash began attending workshops on how to conduct nonviolent demonstrations against Jim Crow. In the spring of 1960 the student sit-in protests against segregated lunch counters began in Nashville. Ms. Nash found herself deeply involved in protest activities despite her earlier claims that she would not go to jail because she was afraid. Within a short period of time Ms. Nash became a major leader of the student protest movement in Nashville. In fact, she became the chairperson of the Central Committee which was the leadership organ of the movement. In this capacity Nash led demonstrations and spent time in jail as a result.

During this era Fisk administrators were opposed to students participating in sit-ins. They believed it was not the proper thing for a Fisk woman to do. Yet, Fisk administrators were not straight-forward because earlier they had taken a pro sit-in position in an interview with Jet Magazine. Nevertheless, a Fisk dean approached Nash informing her that if she did not desist from her protest activities she was going to be expelled from school. Ms. Nash responded, "I said, you go right ahead, and I'll go straight to Jet Magazine, and tell them what you did." The Nashville sit-in movement continued its protest and was able to desegregate Nashville's lunch counters. Ms. Nash remained in the forefront of that struggle.

Ms. Nash went on to become one of the founders of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). She was also the guiding force behind the continuation of the 1961 freedom rides after the initial riders had been severely beaten in Birmingham, Alabama.

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