

Live, Love and Lift
in honor of
Winona Cargile Alexander

IN THE BEGINNING...

As a second child of four girls, I always felt I should go about setting a good example for my two younger sisters as my older sibling did. That's why I have always fostered the attitude of "*can do, will do*". You see, my parents, Reverend Charles and Fannie Cargile were nurturing folks. An African Methodist Episcopal pastor and divinity school graduate, my father along with mother, raised us in Christian faith and pressed the value of an education. They instilled in me the belief that *possibly can be made into certainly*, and *education was the key to advancement*. It all began the day I was born, June 21, 1893 in Columbus, Georgia.

I loved learning! Nothing was more vital than knowledge. One could move mountains, so to speak, with a good education. As the salutatorian of my class in 1910, graduating from Ballard Normal High School in Macon, Georgia was the first of many steps I would take toward higher education. Although it was a rarity during these times for Negro girls to attend college, I enrolled at that renowned Negro college and daddy's alma mater, Howard University, located in Washington, D.C.

SOMETHING SPECIAL HAPPENED WHILE I WAS THERE AT HOWARD....

"Because going to college wasn't the usual thing for black girls, professors at Howard kept reminding us of our responsibility to improve the status of women"

Now I'm not trying to toot my own horn, but I was always an exceptional student with a passion for scholastic achievement. Howard University provided just the right foundation for educational advancement and social change. Many of our Negro leaders, doctors, lawyers, teachers and other professionals once graced this bustling campus.

I was involved and affiliated with several activities and clubs while there.

- Class Vice President (1911)
- Member of YWCA Cabinet (1912, 1913)
- International Awareness and Involvement
- Alpha Phi Literary Society
- Secretary of Classical Club (1912, 1913)
- Secretary and Treasurer of Social Science Club
- Secretary of Deutsche Verein (German Club)

- NIKH Board (Yearbook Staff)

It was three years later at Howard that I became a part of a great movement that would ultimately affect thousands and thousands of women lives. On **January 13, 1913**, I along with 21 of my female classmates banded together and formed Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. We wanted to maintain standards of character and knowledge toward lifting the level of womanhood. I served as the first Custodian of the Alpha Chapter. We continued to focus on our purpose of scholarship, service and sisterhood with many campus activities and projects. **Delta Sigma Theta Sorority** had become a popular, recognized organization on campus.

"We thought by incorporating our goals in an organization (Delta Sigma Theta Sorority), we could pass them on to future generations."

Today, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. is a non-profit woman organization, which maintains the goal providing public service. It has over 900 chapters worldwide and boasts a membership of 200,000. The sorority sponsors and administers programs on the local, national and international levels.

BEYOND HOWARD - THE PROFESSIONAL YEARS

After graduating "cum laude" from Howard in 1914, I accepted a position in Sedalia, Missouri as a high school English teacher. As an English major, my fondness for literature and reading would now be shared with young minds.

While teaching in Missouri, I applied and received a fellowship to pursue graduate training at the New York School of Philanthropy, now known as the Columbia University School of Social Work. In 1915, I became the first person of color to enroll in the program.

In 1916, after having completed my coursework, I moved to Jacksonville, Florida after accepting a position as a **Social Worker** for colored indigents with the Board of Public Welfare (later known as Duval County Welfare Board). In this position, I was able to assist colored folks in receiving care and services not freely provided or found in the community.

I became Mrs. Edward L. Alexander on September 27, 1917. Edward was an attorney with whom I would spend twenty-seven wonderful years of marriage. To this union, six children were born - four girls who died at childbirth, and two sons, Edward Jr. and James. Soon, we moved to Switzerland, Florida, and a tiny, isolated community about 20 miles south of Jacksonville. My role as wife, mother and co-owner/operator of a citrus grove remained my focus and passion until my husband's death in 1943.

Moving back to Jacksonville in 1943, my family and I resided in the Davis Street community. I became active with the Laura Street Presbyterian

Church and was later ordained an Elder. Additionally, I was involved with Delta Sigma Theta Sorority; the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and went back into social work as an Administrator with the Traveler's Aid Society (1948) and an Admissions Officer with Brewster Hospital (1950-60). Note: Brewster Hospital was the only hospital in the city to serve blacks during this period. Some of my other activities included the Methodist Hospital Board of Directors, United Presbyterian Women's Organization, YWCA Board, Jacksonville Inter-Racial Council, Elder, Sunday school teacher and Pianist (Laura Street/Woodlawn Presbyterian Church)

Professional Years

- Graduated with honors 'cum laude' with major in English, Howard University, 1914
- High school English teacher in Sedalia, MO, 1914
- New York School of Philanthropy (Columbia University School of Social Work), 1915
- Social Worker for Colored Indigents, Board of Public Welfare (Jacksonville), 1916
- Married Attorney Edward L. Alexander, 1917
- Wife, mother and co-owner/operator of a citrus grove in Switzerland community, 1917-43
- Administrator with the Traveler's Aid Society (Jacksonville, FL), 1948-50
- Admissions Officer with Brewster Hospital (Jacksonville, FL), 1950-60

Affiliations

- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
- Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) Board
- Methodist Hospital Board of Directors
- United Presbyterian Women's Organization
- YWCA Branch
- Jacksonville Inter-Racial Council
- Elder, Sunday School teacher and Pianist (Woodlawn Presbyterian Church)

LATER YEARS...

About 46 years after graduating from college, I decided to retire and Brewster Hospital was my last employer. However I wasn't finished working,

serving people that is, by a long shot. I continued to work in my church, Woodlawn Presbyterian, they say for a total of sixty-five years. I was an elder, Sunday school teacher, and auxiliary chairperson. There is nothing I could do or give that surpasses what the Lord has given or done for me.

"Young women in her day were very serious. We had great responsibility for training, preparation and (we had great) aspirations. I think our aims have stood the test of time."

I loved being active and involved with Delta Sigma Theta and the local chapter, Jacksonville Alumnae. I have had the good fortune to attend many local, regional and national meetings. In 1963, I was present to cut the ribbon at the opening of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority's National Headquarters in Washington, D.C. When we (Delta founders) graduated Howard, we began establishing Delta chapters in our hometowns and other cities. Never could we have visualized that this organization (sorority) established at Howard University would experience such phenomenal growth and become an international sisterhood. It is rewarding to know that our purpose and mission continues to be executed and has made a difference in some person's life.

FINAL CALL ...

Mrs. Winona Cargile Alexander died on October 16, 1984 at ninety-one years of age. Her son, James S. Alexander, of Silver Springs, Maryland, survives her. Her life was truly a testament of her faith, values and belief.

"I would characterize her as a very special person, a brilliant and compassionate woman, deeply religious, with a genuine concern for humanity, who in her own way attempted to make a viable contribution to making the world a better place. This certainly involved improving the quality of life in Jacksonville. Her love for Delta, especially the undergraduate members, was undying." A beautiful assessment from James Alexander

Delta Sigma Theta shall remember our **Founder and sister Winona Cargile Alexander** waving with a smile and saying, "Fond greetings to all you dear Deltas, I love you." **DELTA SIGMA THETA SORORITY, INC.** is an international sorority founded by twenty-two women on the principles of public service, social welfare, academic excellence and cultural enrichment. Since its inception in 1913 at Howard University, this stellar woman organization has garnered national and international acclaim for its continued humanitarian purposes. Delta Sigma Theta has a membership of over 200,000 women with 900 chapters worldwide in its great sisterhood. The membership includes such notables as Mary McLeod Bethune, Alexis Herman, Dorothy I. Height, Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, Judith Jamison, Cicely Tyson, Carol-Moseley Braun, Marian Wright Edelman, Barbara Jordan, Shirley Franklin and many other outstanding women.

The major programs of the Sorority are based upon the organizations'

FIVE POINT THRUST PROGRAM

**Economic Development
Educational Development
International Awareness & Involvement
Physical and Mental Health
Political Awareness and Involvement**

National Headquarters
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
1707 New Hampshire Avenue N.W
Washington, D.C. 20009

Established in 1946, the local Delta chapter, **JACKSONVILLE ALUMNAE**, has been providing service to the Jacksonville community for 63 years. The chapter is a diverse group of professional women who have combined their knowledge and skills to launch a series of public service programs. These projects and programs are developed and implemented to address the critical needs of the community and people.

Written by: Soror Karen Richardson