

Mamie Herron Shields

A Sower - Planting Seeds - Bearing Much Fruit

My appreciation for Mamie Herron Shields and her important work in Yalobusha County first came through her husband, Lincoln. Mr. Shields was a teacher and basketball coach at Davidson High School in Water Valley. He was also my bus driver during my high school years and like other drivers filling a very important role. They are caretakers in jobs that require meeting safety requirements, maintaining discipline and delivering students to and from school - the first school representative that some students encounter each day. As a teenager I vividly remember seeing my bus going down one road, circling around for 3 or 4 stops before getting to mine, which was my cue to head up the hill to be picked up.

In an earlier column I mentioned that the bus for Water Valley's white students passed by my stop first. My protection and security came with the second bus - my bus and my bus driver. You see, in the South a young black girl standing alone in a curve on a country road with no neighbors in sight could be a target, as I was. One afternoon when I got off the bus and headed down the hill towards our house, I heard yelling and looked back to see a white man standing at the top of our driveway being most obnoxious. I ran. He had stopped in the middle of the road. I was maybe 14, afraid, but so disgusted that I never mentioned it and never tarried after that when getting off the bus.

Mr. Shields was always on time, alert and well dressed, a different shirt ironed and pressed every day when most of our wardrobes were far sparser. Like many drivers, Mr. Shields had to stop at the school to pick up his bus to begin his route, which made me wonder what time he left home, how his children got to school, and if they had a hot breakfast. The way he presented himself and the few times I saw his wife, Mamie, whose job as a home extension agent I barely understood, made me think of her as the ideal mother of well-mannered children in a perfect home - theirs was made of brick on highway 7 in Coffeeville.

Mr. Shields was a great educator, administrator and coach. I am sure that he and his wife went into their pockets, closets and pantries many, many times to assist others. Though decades have passed since Mr. Shields picked me up in Water Valley, it is never too late to offer thanks and appreciation on behalf of myself, Davidson students, faculty and the communities for his leadership, guidance, support, service and love.

Mamie Shields worked for the Home Extension Agency, an outgrowth of 1914 legislation that cemented a cooperative effort between the U. S. Department of Agriculture and land grant colleges. Extension office personnel held informal educational programs and hands-on demonstrations designed to enrich local communities. Mrs. Shields conducted demonstrations at our 4-H Club meetings and in our home economics class at school. I believe she also visited folks in their homes throughout the county and gave demonstrations at the extension offices. I took note of how she managed her job and her family. She always had it together.

I was in college before I came to know her children, Suzette, Derrick and Jeffery, who attended Coffeeville public schools. I tried to recruit Derrick when I worked at the University of Mississippi, and he did attend a



For more than 50 years, Mamie Lee Herron Shields has been an integral member of the Yalobusha County community.

Dottie Quaye Chapman Reed, a native of Water Valley, MS, graduated from Davidson High School in 1970 and the University of Mississippi in 1974. The mission of the project is to compile and share information about black women in Yalobusha County who have made an impact on the African American community. Her column appears in The North Mississippi Herald.

The second phase of the project in collaboration with UM is on going - providing an opportunity for black families in Yalobusha to record their oral histories.

If you are interested in participating, recommending an individual, telling your own story or have comments please contact us at quaye_reed@bellsouth.net - 678252356 (O) - 6782525408 (C).

All articles are posted at <http://www.blackwomenofyalobusha.com>



By Dottie Chapman Reed

children. Derrick, her oldest son, (married to Andrea Smith Shields, a realtor with Keller Williams Realty River Cities), serves as senior pastor of Christ Community Church in Columbus, Georgia. Her daughter, Doris Suzette Ware, (the wife of Pastor Larry W. Ware of the Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church of Coffeeville), worked in banking for many years and as a certified housing specialist in housing management in both Iowa and Florida. Her youngest son, Jeffery, (married to Angela Williams Shields, an electrical engineer at NASA in Huntsville), is senior program analyst at the Space and Missile Defense Command at Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Alabama.

Mamie Shields' success as a wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother illustrates her lifelong commitment to excellence and the moral foundation laid for her by her late parents, Beulah Newsome Herron and Reverend M. H. Herron of Prentiss, MS. Mamie is the tenth of eleven siblings, all of whom are now deceased, leaving her as the only survivor of the close-knit and loving Herron clan. She is the grandmother of 11 and the great-grandmother of 4. She is the aunt of 40 nieces and nephews and the great-aunt, great-great aunt of over 100, many of whom call her frequently to check on her and her family or to seek counsel.

Like so many of her generation, Mamie left home to go to college after graduating in May 1949 from Prentiss Normal Institute in Prentiss. Her elementary education was at the Pine Ridge public

school in White Sand. Mamie completed a Bachelor of Science Degree in Home Economics at what is now Alcorn State University in June 1953. She completed further studies in home economics at Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI, and extension education at Prairie View A & M University in Texas. In May 1974, she completed the Master of Arts Degree at the University of Mississippi. She received the Award for Distinguished Service from the National Association of Extension Home Economists in November 1980.

Before arriving in Coffeeville and Yalobusha County, Mamie served as a home economics classroom teacher in Hattiesburg in 1954. She taught home economics in Columbia in 1956. In 1959 Mamie's work took her to Winston County and the Cooperative Extension Service, which was administered by Mississippi State University. As the county home demonstration agent, Mamie



Family members assembled following a worship service at a local church included (top row, from left) Larry, Suzette, Andrea, Derrick, Angella, and Jeffery; and Lincoln and Mamie Shields (seated).

conference for national merit and achievement students. But he decided to go elsewhere. Mr. and Mrs. Shields are now enjoying each other in that same house on Highway 7. With each column I learn, grow and am encouraged through the lessons gleaned from these women's lives. Below Mamie's children offer detailed insights into yet another outstanding black woman of Yalobusha County.

Mamie Lee Herron Shields

By Suzette and Larry Ware

For more than 50 years, Mamie Lee Herron Shields has been an integral member of the Yalobusha County community not only through her professional life but also from the example she set raising her family - as noted in the introduction, her husband Lincoln and three chil-

school in White Sand. Mamie completed a Bachelor of Science Degree in Home Economics at what is now Alcorn State University in June 1953. She completed further studies in home economics at Michigan State University in East Lansing, MI, and extension education at Prairie View A & M University in Texas. In May 1974, she completed the Master of Arts Degree at the University of Mississippi. She received the Award for Distinguished Service from the National Association of Extension Home Economists in November 1980.

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