

MRS. ZEOLA BELL GERMANY ALLSTON

*Global Educator, Gifted Dramatist,
Godly Influencer*

1927 - 2023

Zeola Bell Germany's life began in Fairfield, Alabama, part of the Birmingham metropolitan area. She was the eighth of 14 children born to Will and Gyzinia Germany, June 1, 1927.

Her childhood years witnessed Zeola teaching her younger brothers to speak "properly;" schooling neighborhood children on her front porch and successfully participating in public speaking contests and dramatic presentations.

Before she graduated from the segregated Fairfield Industrial & Technical High School in 1945, her parents and their younger children were baptized after attending evangelistic tent meetings conducted by Elder Herman L. Murphy and Elder E. T. Mimms.

At that time, embracing the Adventist lifestyle meant that her ambitions for a Hollywood career would not materialize, much to the criticism of her high school drama coach. Instead, Zeola traveled 123 miles north to attend Oakwood College in the fall of 1945.

She was already trained in secretarial skills. Not sensing career opportunities beyond this arena, she declared Secretarial Science her academic major as a freshman. At the same time, God assigned her to work with Dr. Natelkka Burrell in the Education Department. This legendary teacher-mentor convinced her that while her current skills were secretarial, her true passion and gifts were in teaching and educating young fertile minds for both Time and Eternity.

After spending summers colporturing in Harlem and Houston, she graduated in 1949 with a Secretarial Science degree and with an Elementary Education minor. She began teaching at the Magazine Street SDA Church School in Louisville, Kentucky.

After successfully ending her first teaching year in 1950, she rewarded herself with a trip to Boston, Massachusetts, to study and learn its historic sites firsthand. In addition to this fact-finding adventure,



Mrs. Mae Justiss introduced her to another Boston "site": WWII veteran, local church lay leader and friend, 33-year-old bachelor Thomas Gray Allston. Their mutually-ignited sparks kindled a subsequent formal engagement.

This resulted in their June 17, 1951 marriage; her relocation to Everett, a neighboring Boston suburb; and their parenting of Miriam Dawn (1952), Thomas "Tim" III (1954), Ivan Mark (1964), and Tonya Elise (1966).

However, two weeks after becoming a wife and a year before becoming a mother, Zeola became a Globetrotter. *Message Magazine* featured her, Calvin Rock and William DeShay, the lone Negroes of the 44-member US delegation to the 1951 Paris Youth Congress.

God gifted her both to nurture their children's early private schooling directly while returning to her calling. She resumed teaching at Boston's Cooper Community Center preschool program, (1957-1960); worked as Principal at the Berea SDA Church School (1962-64); directed the summer Head Start initiative at the New England Sanitarium and Hospital (1965-67) and integrated the nearby Gerry Street SDA School (renamed the Edgewood SDA School, 1966-72) as the seventh and eighth grade teacher. Her children Dawn, Tim and Ivan served as its "Jackie Robinsons and Kamala Harris!"

In June 1972, Zeola accepted a demonstration teaching appointment at nearby



Atlantic Union College. Simultaneously, she and Mrs. Delores Richardson were initiating a Boston/Oakwood College alumni chapter.

August 1972 featured her college schoolmate, and now Oakwood College President, Elder Calvin Rock visiting Boston and officially chartering its first-ever alumni chapter. Then just three days later, he called Zeola and Tom at their new South Lancaster, Massachusetts, home, and offered them a dream opportunity: to servant-lead and role model to students at Oakwood.

On Sunday, August 27, 1972, she, Ivan, 8 and Tonya, 6, completed their 1,472-mile trek and began their stewardship to Oakwood College and Oakwood Academy, respectively. While Tom directed Oakwood's transportation department, Zeola directed Peterson Hall (1972-73) and later became its first Director of Student Activities/Assistant Dean of Students (1973-78).

Equally crucial since 1972, their home became the "Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island" for more than 30 Oakwood students who needed less-expensive room and board and, yes... Adventist home nurturing.

Higher education was temporarily OK in serving Oakwood, but she pined for her most genuine passion: elementary education and her newly-acquired specialty of multigrade classroom management. In 1979, she returned to the work as the elementary principal and taught at Oakwood's lab school. She enhanced her subject-matter expertise each succeeding summer; and earned a Master's degree in Education in 1982, from Loma Linda University.

In 1989, Mrs. Allston received the 1989 Tom and Violet Zapara Excellence in Teaching Award—South Central Conference's first-ever awardee. She co-authored *A Star Gives Light*, the first definitive Black SDA curriculum primer, also in 1989.

At the 1993 invitation of now General Conference VP Dr. Calvin Rock, she taught English in Moscow, Russia, that summer.

Additionally, she led multigrade classroom initiatives in the Cayman Islands (1996), Hatchuchebbee/Hurtsboro, Alabama district (1996), and Pensacola, Florida (2005). Her final globetrotting assignment was teaching nursing students English in 2006 in Northern China.

Her Allston family stopped "the retirement jokes" when she left her maroon lesson-plan book and multicolored dry-erase markers, Handbell Choir carrying case, dog-eared Camp Alamisco instruction binder, and Black SDA History costumes and scripts to be memorized at her beloved Oakwood Adventist Academy's (OAA) Elementary School building.

But prior to her May 2014 departure, Zeola Allston was feted with: the OAA National Alumni Association annual award; the OAA Quercus yearbook dedications; and Teacher of the Year recognition, American Education Week, Huntsville, 2013.

Having taught SDA education for 64 years - and across eight consecutive decades - routinely she fulfilled: Oakwood Church commitments; assisted daughter Tonya in her Mom Z's Thrift Store; kept updated on local grandchildren Aaron "Jay" and Morgann, and California granddaughters Quinci, Ashley, Alexis, and Kobi Allston and great-grandson Zaire.

Her passing came on October 22, 2023. In closing, we wish to thank our spouses for partnering with us in this Labor of Love. ▼

Special Thanks to the Allston family from *Regional Voice* magazine for sharing this tribute to the remarkable life of Mrs. Zeola Bell Germany Allston. We thank Tim Allston, former Managing Editor of this publication, for bringing his Mother's inspiring story to our pages.