

## **From the Cradle to the Grave~ Our Legacy of Love and Hope**

### **A Collection of African-American Funeral Programs 1958-2005**

#### **The Life of Mrs. Nola Walker Bond**

The heading on her obituary said "celebration of a life well spent", this description of the life of a caretaker aunt, youth educator and community activist is fitting for the person that it portrayed.

Mrs. Nola Walker Bond was born in Brownsville, Tenn. where she spent the majority of her life. With the type of work that Miss Nola, as she was commonly called, was in, she touched the lives of so many in the community.

Included in that group were twelve children that Miss Nola raised, one of them Mrs. Nola Gray. Gray described her life growing up with her aunt.

"My aunt was never able to have children," said Gray.

Miss Nola was the eldest child of ten children and the only child permitted to go to school. According to Gray, because she was allowed to go to school, her father made her promise to take care of the rest of her siblings and the direct result of that was Miss Nola taking in twelve of her nieces and nephews.

"All of us knew who our parents were and we called her aunt," said Gray. "Even my cousin that she raised from a baby called her Aunt Nola."

Miss Nola was also a community activist that broke down color barriers in Brownsville. She was an entrepreneur not because she wanted wealth but because she wanted to help people.

“My aunt didn’t have any money, she gave all of it away,” Gray said. “She was always retiring but she always worked.”

Miss Nola started off teaching school but the first career change was when she began to manage the Haywood County Supermarket. During that time blacks were still fighting to enforce their right to vote. The supermarket was opened because blacks that were registered to vote were refused service at the area grocery store and some even lost their jobs. So that problem would not discourage blacks in the community from voting.

“My aunt voted her whole life,” said Gray, “she really believed in giving back to your folks.”

Miss Nola also started a beauty school in Brownsville so that people would not have to go twenty-five miles to the next town for classes. Another venue that Miss Nola explored was with the Golden Circle Life Insurance Company where she was remembered working with Charles A. Rawls, another prominent figure in Haywood County.

“Al Rawls and Aunt Nola were masterminds in a lot in the community but they did not try to stand out,” remembers Gray. “My aunt was there from the beginning.”

Besides starting businesses in the community, Miss Nola also was very much into education and politics a legacy that she passed on to her nieces and nephews that grew up in her home. Miss Nola was heavily involved with such organizations as the NAACP and the Block Club, as well as being a delegate at the Democratic convention.

According to Gray Miss Nola was a go-to person that with the children she raised, she passed on to them the importance of education and community involvement. Gray commented that her and her cousins said that when they grew up that they would never

be activist like their aunt. Now, all of the children that are still alive are all involved as activists in their communities.

Miss Nola was also a religious woman. Gray told that story of her aunt needing to go to New York City on a business trip but did not have the means to get there. She said that her aunt prayed about it and told her, "I'm not worried about it, God is going to make a way." According to Gray, within thirty minutes, Miss Nola received three phone calls. One of a niece saying she would buy her ticket there, another call from another niece saying she would provide hotel costs and another call from a nephew saying that he would give her spending money for the trip.

"Aunt Nola would say 'don't moan about what you don't have, the Lord will make a way.'" Gray said about the unlikely trip.

Since Miss Nola's death the community, along with the nieces and nephews that she raised, has started a scholarship named after her in her honor.

"The scholarship is for C students," said Gray, "because my aunt believed that the A and B students would get everything."

"Aunt Nola instilled in all of her kids self worth and self confidence." Gray commented about her aunt's legacy that she left, "and let us know that we could do anything that we wanted to."

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Events in the life of Mrs. Nola Walker Bond  
March 27, 1914 – November 30, 1998

- In June of 1914, World War I begins
- 1929- Black Thursday, the Stock Market crashed
- 1972- First African-American woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives; ran for the office of President of the United States
- 1935- The Social Security Act was set up to ensure an income for the elderly.

**On March 27:**

- 1941- Japanese spies began to case Pearl Harbor
- 1952- Infamous Sun Records of Memphis, Tennessee was started. Early artists include Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash
- 1964- the strongest earthquake in American history created deadly tsunami- Good Friday Earthquake
- 1994- Palm Sunday Tornado outbreak in Alabama

**Famous Birthdays**

- 1924- Sarah Vaughn
- 1963- Quentin Tarantino
- 1970- Mariah Carey