



Mrs. Irene Bishop Goggans

February 23, 1926 - June 23, 2017

On the morning of June 23, 2017, the Lord received the undying spirit of IRENE BISHOP GOGGANS. She was a loving mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, sister, aunt, cousin, friend, community activist, historian and griot.

Growing up in Dyersburg, Tennessee, the second child of John Hal Bishop and Mary Franklin Bishop, Irene was born February 23, 1926. With older sister Mary Pickford, her bosom buddy, the two joined forces as mentors to younger brother, William Franklin. In the segregated South, Irene became keenly aware of the disparities between facilities for blacks and whites and how news about black people was often under-reported or missing from the newspaper. Irene began clipping newspaper articles, documenting stories about African American life. This was a practice she inherited from her mother, a school teacher, who kept books about important African Americans. Nevertheless, Irene considered her upbringing a nurturing one, thanks to loving parents, siblings, teachers, the church and a nurturing African-American community.

Irene was educated in the Dyersburg Public Schools and attended Future City and Blanche K. Bruce High School until she was 16. The family relocated to Milwaukee, September 18, 1942, after her father, a master mechanic, was refused a job at the Army Ammunition Plant in Milan, Tennessee. They joined other family members who had settled in 1927.

Irene promptly enrolled in Lincoln Jr./ Sr. High School. After reviewing her

Blanche K. Bruce High School transcript, Irene was informed that she only needed one year of physical education in order to graduate. She fulfilled the requirement and graduated from high school in 1943 at the age of seventeen. Following high school graduation, Irene attended Milwaukee State Teachers College (now UW-Milwaukee) for one year and continued her studies at Milwaukee Area Technical College, completing a clerical degree in 1946. In Milwaukee, Irene met her life partner, Pat Goggans, a navy veteran who had returned from Pearl Harbor and found employment as a postal worker. They entered into holy matrimony on May 24, 1947 and shared 36 years together until his death on March 17, 1983. Their union was blessed with one child, Kenneth Goggans. Irene and her family traveled extensively, and she documented each site in her scrapbooks.

Irene's professional career spanned forty-one years. She began work at Lou Fritzel Clothiers, served as a clerk with the Selective Service System, and as a worker for the Internal Revenue Service. In addition, Irene worked for the U.S Census Bureau, the Milwaukee Election Commission, and finally as a para-professional with Milwaukee Public Schools, retiring in 1988. Regardless of her career path, Irene considered local history her true calling.

In her early years in Milwaukee, Irene was a member of the Y's Menettes and she worked to sponsor the Ebony Fashion Fair to benefit Boys' Camp. She was also a member of the YMCA's Verse Speaking Choir. As the first African-American PTA President at Lafollette Elementary School, Irene focused on diversity programs to foster school integration, as well as, community activities to curtail racial profiling.

Irene's life demonstrated a legacy of community involvement. She chronicled the events, people, and places of note in a 300 volume historical collection, which she began upon her arrival in Milwaukee in the early 1940s. She became a primary consultant, as well as participant, in most prominent community events. She made several appearances on Channel 10/36- Black Nouveau with Joanne Williams and WTMJ Channel 4- Positively Milwaukee with Carole Meekins. She appeared on the cover of Black Women 50+

Lifestyle Magazine and served as the consultant and editor for Milwaukee Times Newspaper, Golden Moments column, honoring African Americans celebrating 50 years of marriage. Further, Irene contributed to numerous scholarly publications and recently provided research for First Stage Milwaukee's production of Welcome to Bronzeville.

Her participation in the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) church began early. As a youth, no program was complete at Womack Temple CME in Dyersburg without Miss Irene's performance. A Girls Guides member, Irene embraced the club's motto: "Face life squarely: and find and give the best." Irene's rendering of services to St. Matthew CME Church began at 538 Walnut Street and continued throughout her life, She served as a member of the following organizations: H.C Coggans Club, Sunday School Instruction (Intermediate Class), Class Leader, Vacation Bible School Instructor, Stewardesses (Naomi Board), Ida Mae Black Missionary Society (Ora Taylor Circle), Cheer Committee, Communication Secretary- Upper Room Ministry. Irene's Christian service extended to Milwaukee Unit of Church Women United, where she served as necrologist and premiered the St. Matthew Women's Ensemble. As the composer and presenter of bereavement resolutions, Irene also assisted in organizing the funeral repast serving rotations. In addition, Irene was elected as a delegate to conferences (local/ district/ annual), served as church historian, designed historical birthday and Christmas cards for celebrants, and served as the telephone birthday messenger to St. Matthew member, family and friends- both locally and nationally.

During her lifetime, Irene received numerous honors. In 2008, she appeared on the Milwaukee Neighborhood Calendar for the months of October, November & December. In 2010, she was inducted into the Milwaukee County Senior Citizen Hall of Fame. In 2011, she received the Milwaukee County Historical Society's Witness to History Award. In 2012, Irene was honored as a Social Justice Icon by Milwaukee Times Black Excellence Awards

committee. Irene received numerous communications from President Barack Obama and distinguished herself as a significant scholarly contributor on the subject of the African-American community in Milwaukee. Because of her extensive research, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee bestowed upon Irene Bishop Goggans the honorary degree of Doctor of Community History during the 2015 commencement.

Cultural myths and folklore honor butterflies as a symbol of transformation. For Dr. Irene Goggans, butterflies personified her unwavering faith as life transitions from one season to another. On June 23, 2017, her earthly journey transitioned her well-earned celestial life. There to greet her with open arms were her husband, Pat Goggans; her parents John and Mary Bishop; sisters, Georgia Freedonia Bishop-Fox and Mary Pickford Bishop Roger; and many other family members and friends.

Loved ones who will remember Dr. Irene Bishop-Goggans for the love she bestowed on them include: son, Kenneth Goggans (Sherry); brother, William Franklin (Alicia) Bishop; grandchildren: Damon (Tamara), Kyra, Kyle and Arnetha; ten great grandchildren; nieces, nephews, a host of other cousins and friends.

Cemetery Details

Northwest Cremation Services

6630 W. Hampton Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53218

Previous Events

Memorial Service

JUL 8. 12:00 PM (CT)

St. Matthew CME Church
2944 N. 9th Street
Milwaukee, WI

Tribute Wall

SH

“ We were saddened to learn of the passing of Mrs. Goggins. She was a beautiful spirit. Sandra has fond memories of being in Mrs. Goggins' Sunday school class back in the day at St. Matthew C. M. E. Church. She imparted so many lessons to her classes both from the Bible and from life. We offer our sincere sympathy and deepest prayers. Rev. Dr. Robert L. and Mrs. Sandra F. Palmer Holt



Sandra Holt - June 30, 2017 at 10:08 AM

SH

“ Sylvia Hilliard sent a virtual gift in memory of Mrs. Irene Bishop Goggans



Sylvia Hilliard - June 28, 2017 at 07:33 PM

SH

“ Sylvia Hilliard lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Irene Bishop Goggans



Sylvia Hilliard - June 28, 2017 at 07:29 PM

SH

Mrs. Goggins was one of the most beautiful soul. Job well done angel. My condolence to all the family. Love you all...

Sylvia Hilliard - June 28, 2017 at 07:32 PM

CA

“ *Irene was a dear friend, a truly good person , and our community historian. She will be greatly missed by all that knew her.*

Carol Wallace Conner

Carol - June 28, 2017 at 03:58 PM

SH

Mrs. Goggins was one of the most beautiful soul. Job well done angel. My condolence to all the family. Love you all...

Sylvia Hilliard - June 28, 2017 at 07:27 PM

VS

mrs Goggins rest in peace you have now you can join the angels love you the late vesta sheppard and family

vivette sheppard - July 09, 2017 at 03:52 PM