**Leonora DeVeaux Brown**

**(1933-2018)**

Leonora Brown was born in Virginia to John Allen DeVeaux, a minister in the A.M.E. church, and Della Phillips DeVeaux. She had two brothers,John Allan and William Phillips. When Leonora was still a baby, her family moved to Pennsylvania because her father had the opportunity to join the Army. He became a chaplain in the Army and his base was in Georgia. He left for Georgia, while she Leonora and her family stayed in Pennsylvania because of segregation laws in the South. After a few years, the family moved to Arizona when her father was transferred there. Her youngest brother William was born in Arizona. In a 2014 interview, she recalled that her experience in Arizona was good. Leonora’s family left Arizona at the beginning of WWII. She was not directly affected by the war. Her father was not home but no one close to her family died. During WWII she lived in Jacksonville, Florida with her grandmother, Leonora Alum Deveaux. The consequences they suffered from the war was the rationing of the food and the departure of men that were drafted. While living in Jacksonville, thefamily lived in a segregated area.

After living in Florida, Leonora and her family moved to Kansas when her father was transferred to Fort Riley. Leonora’s experience in Kansas was enjoyable but she noticed the subtle segregation there. She and her brothers attended an integrated school but she remembers that the racial division was clear. In the cafeteria, black people did not sit with white people. Black students were involved in sports but they were not included in any social events or plays. She graduated from Johnson City High School. After she graduated, she attended Hampton Institute and majored in Sociology. She described life on campus ~~w~~as being really nice. It had a country setting but with strict rules.

During Leonora’s time in Kansas, she met Orlando Brown, a soldier who was at Fort Riley training. After graduation from Hampton they were married in December of 1953. After they married, her husband was stationed in Germany, and she joined him there. She remembered that during the time there were a lot of poor people in Germany begging for food. When her husband ended his duty in Germany, they came back to the United States. They didn’t have a specific plan of where they would live. Mr. Brown had some relatives in Chicago so they were driving to Chicago. While driving, they stopped in Yellow Springs where’ Leonora’s uncle lived. He convinced Mr. Brown to get a job in Yellow Springs and he did. He hired at Vernay’s, a precision rubber manufacturer in Yellow Springs, and he stayed there for 11 years. Her husband went back to school and got his degree in Education. Leonora started teaching four years after her husband was hired at Vernay’s.

Leonora’s teaching career started in Dayton and most of her years as a teacher were in 5 grade. She remembers that integration started with the teachers. Even though she had mostly white co-workers she never suffered any kind of hostility. She recalls that during the 1950’s there were no black teachers in Yellow Springs. During the civil rights movement, she remembers Antioch students protesting. Mr. Brown built their house in Yellow Springs when he was working in Vernay’s. Leonora’s uncle, Richard Phillips helped him in building their house. The Browns had three sons, Orlando Vernon, Allen, and Martin, and when they were growing up Leonora was an active Scout mother of Boy Scout Troop 78.

Leonora joined Central Chapel AME Church in Yellow Springs one week after coming to Yellow Springs. She really liked the people in church and noted that the people were nice, kind and friendly at the church. Her husband became a trustee of the church and he was involved in the construction of the new building of the church. She indicated that her husband went to a bank and asked for a loan in order to construct the building. Mr. Brown put their house as a guarantee until the~~y~~ church paid the loan of the church. Leonora was a proud to be a member of Central Chapel. There she served on the Steward Board for many years, was a member of the Senior Choir, the Stewardess Board, and the Lay Organization.

Leonora was also a member of Friends for Payne Seminary, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., She passed away in 2018.

Kensy Zelaya

Sources:

* “Leonora Brown Interview”, 2014, WYSO Civil Rights Oral History Project
* Maude Leonora DeVeaux Brown Funeral Program, March 17, 2018