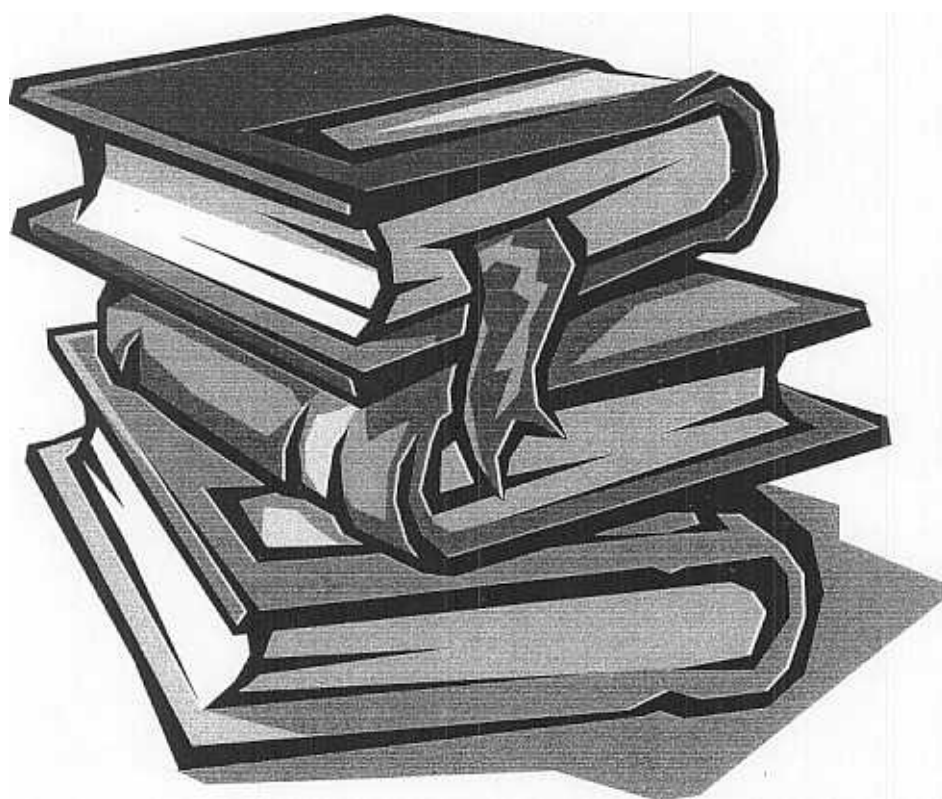


# **SCHOOL DAYS**

By




**Beatrice Woodson Beale Burwell**

## SCHOOL DAYS

was reared in Roanoke, VA during every different time. I was the only  
900 not very different then. There were few things particular that  
shaped who I was to become and how would the world and all has  
An little did I know, my school days were to be lifelong.

### As a student...

When I was a young girl, school was such a special and cherished thing to  
my family. We were taught from early on to remember that school was  
just right, but primary and that as on as "had the zest" for  
earning and the opportunity to do that nothing should stop me from  
broadening my mind, experiencing new things. I have learned by that  
for nearly a century. What a blessing from God! To this day, for  
the rest of my day, I am constantly marveling at the changed world around  
me, learning from every experience or conversation. I look into the  
eyes of an hearts of the young students and thank God that I am here on  
this day. I learn from the teachers by sharing my experience.  
Language, using books, movies, poems, songs, people, places, you name  
it, are all sources of continued fascination and learning for me. Everything  
that opens my mind teaches me something new. From learning like



breathing—knowledge, like air. So, when I recall my “School days”, I cannot limit them to time spent in a classroom. For me learning is a lifelong experience. I have now and always have had an incredible zest for learning.

I was blessed to have grown up in a religious family that understood the value of education and the importance of faith and persistence in achieving any goal. One of the earliest lessons my parents taught us was to look for wisdom in everything we did. I have lived by that my entire life and every day is a brand new school day for me. When I was growing up, the Woodson children understood from the beginning that failure was never an option and excellence was always expected. We took those principles into the classrooms and out into the world each and every day.

When I was coming along, there was not much division between our community, church, and school. In school, our days began and ended with prayers. In church, there was more learning about God’s greatness and his love for us. In the community we shared what we’d learned , making each other’s lives and our neighborhoods rich, loving, and safer places to live. And if at any point a child decided to step out of line, or lost their way, the

church, neighbors, teachers were always there to show us through what we did, correct our wrongs.

We learned in school, we learned in church, we learned in the community from our neighbors, friends. As a child, I had an insatiable appetite for learning anything—anything. At a very early age, I wanted to know everything about everything—so you can see my life has always been full of learning, learning, learning, enrichment. As an elementary student, I was taught that I had a very good mind and there was nothing I could not do. The whole class was taught that and that we believed in.

In junior high and senior high school, I participated in many extra-curricular activities. However, as I recall, practically all junior high school activities were limited to what was offered in the one school. In senior high school, the activities were expanded to include city-wide activities, regional and state competitions. In high school, I was a member of the debating team, oratorical group, and dramatics club. I was lucky to have won the school oratorical contest and the regional contest, and was sent to Virginia State College in Petersburg, VA to represent my school in the state contest. What a thrill that was for me and how proud my family, friends, and church

were of also I was crowned the first Miss Addison of my high school  
Writing about this brought many details of this exciting occasion to  
my mind of course and helped solidify every memory of it. I  
generally enjoyed every moment of it were watching on TV

### College...

would take books to tell of my school days Wilberforce University  
Xenia, Ohio 192 Because of the limitations of words for this writing,  
I will just say that all of my good training was reinforced, my knowledge  
understanding appreciation increased beyond measure Mission and  
desire to help make the world a better place was implanted in my very soul  
and heart-in other words my college days enabled me to face the world

without fear I just say though that I was on the debating team  
Wilberforce and that in itself was an priceless experience was all the  
preparation of the chapter of Delta Sigma Theta sorority and graduated  
Cum Laude

### Open walled school...

Jim Park Estates my open walled school does have walls time  
scheduled structured curriculum, but has the most wonderful resources  
of any university-its residents Here we share experiences and we learn

from each other. We come from many states, different countries, every branch of the armed services, even former prisoners of war. Every profession is a rich resource of knowledge and experience.

In 2001 I was presented the key to the City of Roanoke by the Honorable Ralph Smith, Mayor of Roanoke, and in 2003 I was presented the Star of the City. This was indeed a great honor for me and one which I will cherish.

So you see my “school days” are not yet over, even after 43 years of teaching. Maybe in another 94 years, I’ll be able to say I’ve completed my classes—we’ll just have to wait and see.

## REFLECTIONS

### "Lest We Forget"

When I was very young, I was COLORED; later I was a NEGRO; then I was BLACK and now I am an AFRO-AMERICAN. How Amazing!!!

I did not have to do any research on my topic-Reflections-as I just want to share with you some of the conditions as they existed in the above four phases of my life -- things that I saw with my eyes, heard with my ears and understood with my mind and heart.

### COLORED

When I was COLORED, I lived in a southern city where everything was completely segregated. The COLORED people lived on one side of the railroad tracks and the WHITE people lived on the other side. We didn't question being segregated when I was COLORED -- we just accepted the status quo.

Is there anybody here who remembers the wash boards, the tin tubs, when people made their own laundry soap? Do you remember when we heated flat irons on a stove in order to iron our clothes? Do you remember when we as children not only belonged to our parents, but to the neighbors as well; when we were afraid to misbehave before our neighbors?

When I was COLORED we did not have television, electric appliances, frozen foods and countless other things that we are so accustomed to now. When I was COLORED we never heard of insect repellents, so our parents burned a small rag in a shovel to drive away the insects. The COLORED people canned food all summer and early fall. Nothing was wasted: apple peelings were saved to make jelly and even the rinds from the watermelons were saved to make preserves. Our parents made all of our clothes, even to our hats and underwear. I was quite amused when I read in the paper that scientists had discovered the health value of the onion. I smiled and said to myself, "My mother could have told you that a hundred years ago." Do you remember when the onion was used in the bed, under the bed or at your feet to take away the fever?

The Church was the cornerstone of our lives. It would take a book to tell the impact that the Church had on our lives, so I may say that the Church was all and all to us -- our spiritual life, our fellowship, our hospital and even our court system, for if we did anything that was too unacceptable we were put out of the church and nobody wanted that to happen.

## NEGRO

I have been COLORED and now I'm a NEGRO. Life as a NEGRO was almost the same as when I was COLORED. Everything is still completely segregated and we still accepted the status quo. The old textbooks, desks and other equipment and furniture were sent to the NEGRO schools. Even with all of these adverse conditions, our parents and teachers taught us daily that our minds were not old, that we were strong and smart and that we could be successful regardless of all and any circumstance.

THIS WE BELIEVED!! Every day started with Bible verses and prayer, plus an inspirational talk by our teacher ... emphasizing vision and values, pride and a positive, loving spirit. Let me give just one example to illustrate my point. Every day we would sing the Negro National Anthem (anthem when I was a Negro, hymn today). The teacher would observe us very closely and whenever he/she would see a head not held high, the song would be stopped and the question would be asked, Aren't you proud to be a Negro? Then hold your head up high, put your chest out and sing like you are proud!"

## BLACK

Now I'm BLACK. It would take volumes to tell of the hardships, the suffering, the courage and determination that BLACK people endured during this period to end segregation. These were the years that were so dramatic and traumatic that they are referred to by many people as, "When the world turned upside down." The entire socio-economic and political order in America was changed. BLACK people rewrote the history book!!!

I have noticed a great difference in our "slang language" and the standard language as well since being BLACK. Example: My family visited me and as usual we all got dressed to go to my church, Brookland Union. When we were ready to leave, my grandson said, "Mama Bea, you look BAD." I immediately looked at myself to see what was wrong. When my grandson saw that I was concerned, (to put it lightly), he immediately said, "Mama Bea, you don't look bad, you look GOOD." Before I was BLACK, bad meant bad, good meant good, a pot was what you cooked in, aids meant helping somebody, a crack was a hole in the wall and cool meant temperature, not some name written on your hoos or jacket.



AFRO-AMERICAN

Today I am an AFRO-AMERICAN. I have seen so many of our parents' and grandparents' dreams and hopes for their children come true. We, as AFRO-AMERICANS, at least have the opportunity to soar as high as we want to and in any direction that we so desire. However, the struggle goes on as we look beyond the horizon and as we seek even greater heights for our children, our families, our country and the world.

Change is as certain as taxes and death, but as my parents taught me, everything in life destined to change, but God's WORD.

I thank God daily that He let me live to be COLORED.

I thank God daily that He let me live to be A NEGRO.

I thank God daily that He let me live to be BLACK.

I thank God daily that He let me live to be AN AFRO-AMERICAN.

And I thank each of you for listening!!!

ON THE OCCASION OF  
FELLOWSHIP LUNCHEON  
BROOKLAND UNION SNACC  
Thursday, February 28, 1991  
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Post Script, 2003

AFRICAN AMERICAN

When I wrote "Reflections" I was an AFRO-AMERICAN. Now, a few years later, I am an AFRICAN AMERICAN. So again, I can truly say, "How Amazing!!!"

What I wrote in "Reflections" is just a glimpse at the first chapter in The Journey of Life. It is my desire and my prayer that my children, grandchildren and all the future generations will continue the journal I have started.