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From the book "Voices" by Dr. Evelyn Wicker

Gloria Taylor Cheek King, RN '67, BSN, MSN

I was born in Wallace, North Carolina, on October 6, 1946, one of seven children. My father had a mechanical engineering degree and worked as a mechanical supervisor. He retired from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. My mother had a high school diploma and was a wonderful housewife. My family members have made significant achievements: five of seven of my siblings are college graduates, four are graduates of North Carolina Central University (NCCU), in Durham, North Carolina, and one served in the United States Air Force.

I attended high school during the civil rights era when schools were segregated; it was also the beginning of civil unrest and civil rights marches. During my senior year of high school, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated. Later Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed followed by Senator Robert (Bobby) Kennedy. This period was devastating to me. I attended Charity High School in Rose Hill, North Carolina, a rural town known for its tobacco farming, poultry- and pork-producing plants, and blueberry, strawberry, and vegetable farms. I was very active in high school. For example, I was a member of the Glee Club, as we called it, the student council, the 4-H Club, and the French Club. I was also a hall monitor and drove a school bus, for which I was paid. I was crowned Miss Debutante during my senior year, which was a pageant sponsored by the Home Economics Club.

I attended Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing (LHSN) from 1964-1967. When I came to Lincoln, Durham was in the midst of the civil rights marches and civil unrest. I remember the marches in downtown Durham and the setting of fires and burning down of major businesses during riots after the assassination of Martin Luther King. I am sure this period helped mold my thinking as it related to the workplace environment, the practice of hiring minorities in management positions, and the selection of students to attend college at predominately White institutions.

At Lincoln I sang in the choir and attempted to play basketball on the school league, but I was too blind without my glasses to be effective! The most disappointing experience for me was being skipped over for induction into Santa Philomena Honor Society. The most rewarding was passing the nursing licensure board on the first try, and according to a letter sent to my parents by Mrs. Lucille Z. Williams, Nursing Director, I passed with some of the highest scores in the history of Lincoln. During that time we had to pass exams in five separate areas of nursing: Medicine, Surgery, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, and Obstetrics/Gynecology.

I attended White Rock Baptist Church during my training at Lincoln. White Rock was within walking distance of the school at it was also of my faith. I loved the Sanctuary Choir, and they also had a wonderful male chorus. The infamous Reverend Miles Mark Fisher was the pastor. His son, Rev. Miles M. Fisher III, was the chaplain for the nursing school and the basketball coach.

My first professional job was at Duke University Hospital (DUH), in Durham, North Carolina, on Campbell Ward, a gynecology unit with a head nurse from Lincoln, Mrs. Ethel McCullum (1947). Within ten months I was the first Afro-American nurse clinician hired to perform hemodialysis at Duke. Other employment experiences include being a staff nurse at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Durham, where I served for seven years, and a head nurse on the Psychiatric Service, also for seven years. I have been a clinical instructor in Psychiatry-Mental Health at NCCU, Vance Granville Community College, and in the Duke University Accelerated RN Program. I earned a master of science degree in nursing at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, and hold ANA certifications in psychiatry-mental health and Nursing Administration.

My professional and extra curricular activities include a variety of board memberships, for example, the American Cancer Society, participation in a nursing sorority, serving as president of the Pi chapter of Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc., and as one of the founding members of Rho Phi chapter of Chi Eta Phi Sorority, Inc., in Raleigh, and serving as president of the LHSN Alumni Association (LHSNAA). My most notable accomplishments during my tenure as president of the LHSNAA were doubling the membership, establishing a newsletter, and coordination the 100-year celebration of Lincoln Hospital (in 2001), which resulted in the placement of a historic plaque on the old hospital grounds at 1301 Fayetteville Street. LHSNAA's receipt of 501(c)(3) status and the erection of a historic monument on the grounds honoring the School of Nursing and Lincoln Hospital were also in part due to my involvement. The monument is surrounded by bricks engraved with the names of all 600-plus nurses who graduated along with the other names of individuals who were either born there, worked there, or supported Lincoln Hospital and the School of Nursing. Lincoln Community Health Center now operates on this site.

Mrs. L. Z. Williams, director of nursing at Lincoln Hospital and the School of Nursing, instilled in students the importance of professional participation. In addition to my membership in the sororities and the Alumni Association, I am a member of the North Carolina Nurses Association, the American Nurses Association, the Sigma Theta Tau National Honor Society, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. I love my community and have been honored for community service by receiving the Ebonette Service Award and the Mahogany Dime. For me, Lincoln and nursing are synonymous.