

I, Margaret Aquilla Watkins, was born on June 13, 1932, in Milton, North Carolina, to Sterling and Maggie Watkins. I attended elementary school in Blanch, North Carolina, and Milton High School in Yanceyville, North Carolina. Reared on my parents' farm I had only two jobs in my life: the first was on daddy's farm and the other was nursing. Daddy always said, "No working until you finish school and then you can hire yourself out." I was one of eleven children—five girls and six boys and one that my mother and dad adopted at the age of five when his mother passed away.

My mother passed away when I was fifteen years old and my oldest sister Wynolia stepped in and took the lead. Wynolia taught sixth grade eighteen miles from home in Roxboro, North Carolina. She came home every weekend to check our schoolwork and cloths and prepare us for church on Sundays where I was a member of the choir and taught the Youth class. My father, along with Wynolia, made sure I completed post-secondary school along with seven of my siblings, all of whom graduated from professional/academic institutions. My siblings are entrepreneurs, teachers, principals, and railroad engineer.

I made honor roll each month in eleventh grade. I received two Cs, both in Home Economics. When asked why, I replied, "I never could cook or sew." I played the clarinet in the marching band in my senior year. My grades were so high that I did not have to take the final exam. I attended the Duke Practical Nursing Program from May 1951 to May 1952 and earned an LPN diploma. Following the completion of the LPN program, I worked at Duke Hospital for about eighteen months and decided to further my career in nursing and was accepted at Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing (LHSN) on September 8, 1955. It was tough, but thank God I made it!

On Christmas Day in 1956 I became engaged to the love of my life, Melvin Stanfield. Because there were no married students allowed at Lincoln, I had to receive permission to marry in order to remain in school. Permission was granted and we were married on June 30, 1957. I was the first married student to attend LHSN. In September 1957 I went to Crownsville State Hospital, Crownsville, Maryland, for a three-month internship in psychiatry. It was very special because I was able to spend my weekends in Washington, D.C., with my husband. I then interned at Meharry School of Nursing in Nashville, Tennessee, for training in the area of pediatrics. I graduated on September 8, 1958, from LHSN. For the next sixteen months I worked at North Carolina Mutual Insurance Company as a company nurse and then returned to Lincoln Hospital and worked on the maternity ward. I enjoyed working hard on the 3:00-11:00 p.m. shift as well as taking vacations, going to the beach on weekends, and shopping. I was never too busy to get up and go to St. Joseph A.M.E. Methodist Church on Sunday mornings. I joined St. Joseph Methodist Church in April 1959 where I worked faithfully in the church and was the president of the Mary C. Evans Missionary. In October 1960 my life changed drastically when I passed the State Board and became a registered nurse. Thank God!

In September 1965 I obtained employment at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Fort Howard, Maryland. In June 1966 I transferred to Walter Reed Army Medical Center and in June 1969 I was commissioned to First Lieutenant. I became busy with classes: basic training at Kirkland AFB in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Army Medical Advance course at Fort Sam in Houston, Texas, and Army Medical General Staff College at the Academy of Health Sciences, United States Air Force Base, also at Fort Sam. In 1973 I worked with the Public Health Nursing District Government. I spent every summer in school and made my rank right on time.

As for my decorations on my uniform, I received Army Service ribbons, National and Defense Service medals, Army Achievement Medals, and two oak-leaf-cluster Armed Forces medals. My tour of duty included: Walter Reed Army Center, Head Nurse; Fort George Meade, Head Nurse; Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, Retention Officer,; Fort Dix, New Jersey, Area Coordinator; Fort Drum, New York, Area Coordinator; and last but not least, Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Desert Storm, Assistant Chief Nurse of the 2290 U.S. Reserved Hospital. After Desert Storm and twenty-three years of service, I retired.

I had opportunities to do extensive travel including Germany, France (Paris), and other countries. Currently, I stay busy with my church and conferences. I am a member of Ward Memorial A.M.E. Church where I am a member of the Steward and Missionary groups, as well as of nurse and church clubs. Additionally, I became a member of Chi Eta Phi Sorority. I give credit for my accomplishments to God first, and then my elementary school teacher Mrs. Ophelia White Stephens as well as my Principal and other teachers. I particularly give credit to the Lincoln Hospital director of nursing Mrs. L.Z. Williams (a great lady), the nurses and instructors, Mrs. Geraldine Butler, Mrs. Elizabeth Thorpe, Mrs. Lelia Miller, Mrs. Mary L. Thicklin Jones, and all the others who lent their support during my stay at LHSN. Finally, I also give credit to the housemothers, "Mama Bea" White and Mrs. Albertine Mason. Lincoln Hospital School of Nursing was a great school and I will always be grateful to it.

I retired a GS 12 from the District of Columbia government after thirty-one years of service and twenty-three years in the military. Thank God I made it!