

- 
- Della Mae Davison Sullins, RN '37, BSN, MSN

I was born October 13, 1917, in Charlotte, North Carolina. My father was a cab driver and my mother was a housewife. I attended Lincoln around the age of nineteen, still a teenager, and graduated in 1937. I have many fond memories of Lincoln. We were expected to respect the upperclassmen. As part of our initiation, we had to iron their uniforms and always open the door for them, a design of their own. Student life included going to St. Joseph Church down the street and creating our own leisure activities. In the dorm we played records on the old record player, had sing alongs until it was quiet time, and played cards. We did each other's hair in our rooms even though there was a place on the first floor for doing hair. My most difficult challenge while in school was getting up early; we had to be on duty by 7:00 a.m. and had to go back to the hospital to cover staff shortages. Excerpts from my nursing career include the following: I was the first nurse in the state of Alabama to receive a bachelor of science degree in nursing from Tuskegee Institute; this also means that I was the first Black nurse to receive that institution's bachelor of science degree. Later I attended Indiana University in Indiana and obtained my master's degree. The major part of my practice centered around Tuskegee Institute. I began my career as a staff nurse at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Tuskegee and progressed up the ladder to assistant chief nurse. I also taught nursing at Tuskegee Institute and assisted in setting up the nurse aide program at the Veterans Administration Hospital. I have been involved in numerous activities in the community and have received many honors and recognitions.