



Helen Bumbry

MTRIARCH OF THE COMMUNITY



This project, and story series, was made possible by Bella Ease and their vision to capture the life stories and legacies of key community leaders. This is just one of many stories of lasting community impact, overcoming adversity, and creating positive change in the Quincy surrounding area, with stories and memories spanning the last 80 years.

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Helen's 85th birthday celebration, top left to right, Ben Bumbry III and Tyrone Bumbry, sitting left to right, Helen and Cynthia M. Bumbry

THE LIFE OF HELEN BUMBRY

This book tells the life story of Helen Bumbry, in her own words. Helen is, and has always been, a strong community leader. In telling her life story, Helen does not boast of her accomplishments, or claim to be the leader that she is. The matriarch of her family and community, she has left a strong imprint of change and empowerment through her tireless work on the Lincoln-Jackson Pool, in founding and managing The Young Achievers Club, as a much loved and respected bus driver for Quincy Public Schools for 27 years, as a mother, wife, grandmother, friend, church member, and leader in countless community projects.

HELEN'S CHILDHOOD

As told by Helen

I was born April 5, 1937, in rural Palmyra, Missouri. We moved to the city of Palmyra when I was six years old. At the age of 12 my family moved to Quincy, Illinois because my father thought he would be working on the railroad in West Quincy. However, he never worked in West Quincy, so he ended up driving from Quincy to Palmyra!

My mom was a housewife until we were old enough to stay home by ourselves. She then worked at a factory in Hannibal and did housework for a nice family in Quincy. Later, she retired and became a housewife again.

My mom was from Palmyra and my dad was from the small country town of Salt River, Missouri. I remember going to the country to visit my grandparents. While there, my grandfather always wanted someone to comb his hair and he would say, "Come here kid!".



Helen and her mother in the late 1930's

Childhood Memories

PET CHICKEN

One year I got a pet chicken for Easter, and I loved that chicken. However, when we moved to Palmyra, even though we had hogs, I couldn't bring my chicken. The chicken was taken to my grandparents in Salt River. I never really named my chicken; I just called it "Chicken." I put a hat on my chicken, and it walked on the floor and followed me around the house. My grandparents lived near the highway and the chicken wandered onto the highway and was killed. I was truly sad when my chicken died.

BABY OF THE FAMILY

My sister is three years older than me, and my brother is one year, one month, and one day older than me. We were all close. As we got older my sister was a little jealous of me. When parents say someone is the baby of the family and they hate it, I say, "I am the baby and look how old I am!"

GOING TO THE GARDEN

Our cousins had a big lot that they weren't using, and they let us use it for our garden. While I was at work my parents took the kids to the garden and taught them how to plant.

When Bennie was really little, my dad taught him how to plant two seeds and how far apart to put them. If Bennie dropped three seeds, he'd stop and pick them up. My dad told him, "You don't have to pick up the extra seed." But Bennie wanted to be sure that he only got two seeds in each hole.

All my kids really loved gardening. My sister, who had lived in Des Moines, Iowa, moved to Quincy with her kids. Her son was new to gardening and sometimes he would walk on the plants. My dad would yell at him, "Get out of the garden!"

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YOU ONLY WENT TO THE GROCERY STORE TO BUY MEAT; YOU GOT YOUR VEGETABLES FROM THE GARDEN.



Helen as a child, at about 9 years old

WEEKEND TRIPS TO TOWN

When we were little, we lived in the country and would go to town on the weekends. A white couple, their kids, my parents, and my siblings and I, would pile into the car and drive all the way to Monroe City, Missouri. Can't you see us all piled in that car!

After they'd finished grocery shopping, we'd all go to the tavern. My parents would drink and then we'd all go home. I don't know where they put all the groceries with all of the adults and kids in the car. I guess they put them in the trunk.

SUMMER DANCES

When I would visit my aunts and uncles during the summer, they would have dances that were held outdoors. They'd make a platform, have a live band, and you'd dance. One day I was with my aunt and her three kids, and I thought I was going with her to the dance. My aunt said, "You stay in the car and watch the kids."

As a kid, I remember we didn't have much money. As a result, we had to make our own fun. When our skates broke, we made a skateboard. The skateboard had handles with a cross at the top of it. There was a hill that we would go up and pump up as fast as we could and then just ride down the hill.

We had a big round oil tin. We discovered that if you got on top of it you could walk on it and make it roll. We'd start out walking on it and eventually learned to run on it. Sometimes two of us would get on it to see who could stay on it the longest. Having a big yard allowed us to have a lot of fun.

MOVING TO QUINCY

We moved to Quincy when I was 12 years old. I started sixth grade at Lincoln Elementary School and then went to Quincy Junior High School. When I first went to junior high, I got lost in the building. Somehow, I got turned around and ended up getting lost on the back side of the building. Eventually, I learned my way around the building. I really liked junior high school.

I played softball, volleyball, and basketball. Back then, girls were only allowed to play three on three, half-court, basketball. I was glad when they changed it to five on five, full-court, basketball like the boys.



Helen as a child, at about 13 years old

Meeting Ben

Ben was a student at Quincy College. A good friend of mine by the name of Ronnie Washington, introduced me to Ben. Ben asked me if I would go to a "sock hop" with him. To ensure that I had nice socks for the dance, I went out and purchased a new pair of socks. At the time, I lived at 1422 Lind Street. Because neither of us had a car, we walked the six blocks to Quincy College. As we walked to the college, Ben asked, "Do your socks have any holes in them?" We had a really good time at the dance.

Ben was a nice person. When I met his family, they were really nice as well. His family treated me like I truly belonged in their family. We went together for a year and a half before we got married.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Ben was a good basketball player at Drake University. While at Drake, a man approached Ben and attempted to bribe him to "shave points." Ben informed the coach and other officials at Drake of the incident. Ben was leery about returning to Drake. In 1955, two players from the Quincy College basketball team talked Ben into transferring from Drake to Quincy College.

Prison Term for Cage Bribe Offer

Des Moines, Ia., April 19.—AP — Floren Dipaglia, 27-year-old Des Moines businessman, was sentenced today to an indeterminate term of up to 10 years in prison on a charge of attempting to bribe a Drake university basketball star.

Dipaglia's attorney immediately announced the case would be appealed to the Iowa supreme court. Dipaglia remained free on \$4,000 appeal bond.

It was the first case of its kind under a law passed by the 1953 Iowa legislature to provide punishment for bribery in an athletic contest.

Dipaglia was convicted April 3 of offering Ben **Bumbry**, former Drake football star, money to "shave points" on the Drake-Iowa State game last Dec. 22. **Bumbry** testified he refused the alleged Dec. 18 offer and promptly told police and his coach about it.

April 19, 1954 article in the Quincy Herald-Whig

Coach Forrester, you know, didn't usually play that many blacks on the floor back then. He played either four or five blacks on the team, who got to play, to win. Back then, I don't care how good you were, they were not going to play that many blacks on the floor. But he did.

Excerpt of article from the Quincy Herald-Whig, written by Steve Eighinger, October 3, 2012:

And if you have never heard of Easy Ed, Dick Thompson, Edsel Bester, Ben Bumbry and Bill Lemon, well ... you should have.

Those five men, and their coach, the late Harry Forrester, made history in the mid-1950s with the Hawks basketball program. The problem, at the time, was no one realized it.

"Racism, discrimination and segregation followed us around," said Bester, a sophomore forward on the 1954-55 team. "Where to stay during our travels? Where to eat? We were not even welcome at the movies. We could not use certain public restrooms. It was appalling."

- Opposing fans constantly yelled at and threatened the players. The "n" word bombarded their every movement.

All five of Forrester's players went on to incredibly successful post-college careers in varied fields. Easy Ed became a successful high school coach in the St. Louis area, compiling a 677-266 record. At one time, according to Bester, he was only black coach in Missouri at an all-white school (St. Dominic).

Crenshaw is a member of the Missouri Sports Hall of Fame. The gym floor at St. Dominic and the gymnasium at University City (where he also coached) are named after him.

Forrester, who passed away several years ago, always saw more than basketball players when he looked at Easy Ed, Dick Thompson, Edsel Bester, Ben Bumbry and Bill Lemon. He called them his sons, and they were part of the Forrester family.

I know that, because he told me.

"Coach Forrester saw beyond the color of a man's skin," Thompson said.

Yes, he did. He most certainly did.

"They were all good players, but more importantly ... they were good people," Forrester told me in that 2005 interview that I will never forget.

Life with Ben



Helen and Ben cutting the cake at their wedding reception

Ben started taking a wide variety of courses and eventually decided to be a Physical Education Teacher. While attending Quincy College, he worked part-time for the Pepsi company.

Ben's mother was a housewife and never worked. After we got married, he wanted me to be one as well. Ben was going to college and working part-time, and I told him, "No, I think I'll be working."

I went to all of Ben's basketball games except for one. I was working for a family's party, and they told me, "You are going to miss the game, turn on the radio." As it turned out, they were all listening to the basketball game on the radio.

It used to be a big deal to go to all the high school and college games. There was a period of time when they weren't winning, and you could look across the gym and sit anywhere you wanted. Now it's a big deal again since they're winning.



Standing, left to right, Smithy Robbins (Helen's father) and Helen, seated, left to right, Grandpa George Robbins, Grandma Recia Robbins, holding Tryrone Bumbry

BACK TO COLLEGE

In order to support our growing family, Ben took a break from college and got a job at Firestone. He eventually went back to college and got a job working the night shift at Moorman's and drove a mail truck during the day. On the weekends, I would give him a break and I would drive the mail truck. In order to drive the truck, I had to get fingerprinted and get a license. I would usually take one or two of the kids with me on the truck.

We would go to LaGrange, Canton, Wayland, and Hannibal in the big truck. All the kids learned the route and the specifics of the job. One snowy day, when we got to Canton, we realized that we'd forgotten to leave a first-class bag in LaGrange and despite the roads being terrible we had to go to take the mail back to LaGrange. It had to go back because it was first class and had to be delivered the next day.

Ben graduated from Quincy College with a BS Degree in Physical Education. After graduation, he got a job as a physical education teacher at Irving Elementary School. The kids at Irving School loved him.

While at Irving School, he started a class for kids that needed extra help. He set up stations for all the things that they were struggling with. At one of the PTA meetings, he had a program for the parents to see what the kids had learned. He really loved his job and loved the kids.

BEN NAMING THE KIDS

Ben named all four of our kids: Tyrone, Robbin, Cynthia, and Ben III. People can't believe I had nothing to do with it. I just said, "Okay."

Tyrone is Charles Tyrone; he's named after Ben's brother Charles. Robbin Andreas is named for my maiden name of Robbins and after Grace's husband, who is named Andreas. Cynthia is Cynthia Marie; Marie is my mother's middle name.

Then Ben decided to name one after him! Benjamin III. He would have been Benjamin IV, but the name Ben was dropped with Ben's great grandfather. There are no Ben's after that.

HELEN'S CAREER

While I was in high school, one of my aunts was diagnosed with terminal cancer. I don't remember if she asked me, or if I volunteered, to help. There was no one else that could take care of her family. She didn't want her kids to be put into the foster system and be split up. I dropped out of high school to help care for her six kids. It was a two-bedroom apartment on Lind Street. There were eight people living there and I was given the couch to sleep on.

After I married Ben, I started working and decided that I would go back to finish high school. However, I got pregnant and had to quit school again. I was eventually able to get my GED. I chose driving a school bus for the flexibility that it allowed me.

Driving a bus didn't pay as well as some other jobs but it allowed me to be home when our kids were home. I always felt that I needed to be home with them.

When I first started driving the bus, your kids could ride the bus with you. As a result of liability and insurance issues, kids could no longer ride the bus with their parents.

One bus driver also ruined it because she'd let her daughter do whatever she wanted on the bus and wouldn't correct her. Her daughter would put her feet up so the other kids couldn't get on the bus. Eventually, the complaints got back to the supervisor, and they implemented the rule of not allowing your kids to ride with you.

I took kids on trips to Chicago, St. Louis, and Springfield. Although the kids were usually good, it often depended on the teacher's ability to manage their students.

On one trip, the kids were noisy and all over the place. I looked in the mirror and yelled, "I don't know what your teachers think, but I don't need no noise, I've got to drive and keep you safe, so you need to sit down and be quiet!". The teachers didn't say a word. But the kids listened and sat down.

Another time, I thought I had enough gas to get back to Quincy, but I didn't. Whenever you gas up the bus everyone has to get off the bus. The teacher was upset because they had to get off the

bus because she wanted to go straight through. When she got back on the bus, she let the kids do whatever they wanted to do. She tries to be nice to me now, but I never forgot how she acted!

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**I DROVE A SCHOOL BUS FOR 27 YEARS.
I LOVED IT.**

SPORTS FAMILY

When the kids started playing sports, I went wherever they went. I was their personal chauffeur. I even borrowed a friend's camper to drive the family to Dallas, Texas, for a National Softball Tournament that Cynthia was participating in. Tyrone, Robbin and Cynthia all attended college on an athletic scholarship.

Tyrone, Robbin, and Bennie also played baseball and Cynthia played softball. Robbin played football until he broke his arm. We never knew until much later that Bennie's girlfriend didn't want him to play basketball. He told us that he purposely did bad during tryouts so that he wouldn't make the team. It's a decision that he regrets to this day.

All four kids took swim lessons at the YMCA. Because of their ages they were all in different classes. Luckily, their lessons were all the same day. I would sit in the car and read during their lessons.



Standing, left to right, Tyrone Bumbry, Linda Bumbry (Tyrone's former wife), Cynthia M. Bumbry, Robbin Bumbry, Helen Bumbry, Ben Bumbry Jr., Myrtle, Charles Bumbry (Ben's brother), Seated from left to right, Benjamin Bumbry Sr., Melzia Bumbry (Ben's parents)

ROBBIN

Robbin had a massive stroke while he was living in Dallas, Texas. I had just retired from work and was able to stay with him in Dallas for a month while he did physical therapy. Initially, he was like a baby lying in bed as he couldn't talk or even feed himself. When he first started talking, he had aphasia and was primarily speaking in Spanish. Which was problematic as the rest of the family didn't speak Spanish. He gradually started speaking in English (when Ben's sister Grace had a stroke, she had a similar experience, as she was primarily speaking in German and Italian).

Robbin and I moved to Chicago and stayed with Cynthia so that Robbin could continue his rehabilitation and physical therapy at the rehab center in Chicago. I was able to go home on the weekends and be with Ben and take care of other business. After approximately six months, Robbin moved back home with Ben and I.

GRANDKIDS

Our son Tyrone and his former wife, Linda, had two children: Jared and Jacob. We'd visit them at their school in St. Louis on grandparents day every year. We'd also have them stay with us during their summer vacations.

Our son Bennie and his former wife, Sharon, have a daughter named Monica. Monica was in dance club

and played volleyball through college. We'd go to her dance recitals, home games, and travel to some of her away games.

A POOL FOR THE COMMUNITY



Mr. Black came up with the idea for Jackson-Lincoln Community Pool. Mr. Black saw kids jumping into the river and thought it was dangerous as kids could get hurt or drown. Mr. Black decided that he was going to build a pool on the north side of town so that kids wouldn't have to travel to the south side of town to swim. Mr. Black's family donated money to the pool every year.

My friend Earlene Mosby and I worked the concessions at the pool when it first opened. Earlene and I hired all of the staff that worked at the pool the first year that it opened. For the first three years we had volunteers that worked at the pool. I worked ten years as a volunteer for the pool. After ten years I said, "If other people are getting paid, I should get paid."



Kids at the Jackson-Lincoln pool in July of 2022, celebrating 25 years, since the pool opened in 1997.

Ben took my request to the board, and came back and said, "You're hired." I didn't just do concessions, I did it all. I went to various stores to find the best sales so that I could save money for the pool.

The kids were usually good. If the kids misbehaved, Ben or I would speak with them and if necessary,

ban them from the pool for a few days. My niece has run the pool the past few years. When she applied for the job, she didn't tell them that she was related to me. she wanted to get the job without them knowing she was my niece. We celebrated 25 years of the pool being open last year.

Community unites to make a miracle happen

It has been a summer of miracles for those involved with Jackson-Lincoln Pool.

Director Ben Bumbry shakes his head in awe as he looks at the pool and the crowd of splashing, laughing children. It has been less than six months since he learned that this empty lot was going to become something special. Bill and Ann Black donated money to build the pool. The facility opened a little more than a month ago after a breakneck construction phase that everyone said was impossible.

Now on the eve of the final weekend of summer the pool board has announced another miracle: The pool won't close the day after Labor Day, as had been planned. Summer has been extended.

"We're going to keep it open on weekends in September as long as the weather is good. We'll take it one weekend at a time," Bumbry says.

The miracle of the pool didn't come without hard work. Bumbry knows that as well as anyone. For months he and his wife, Helen, have done most of their talking very early in the morning or very late at night, because he has been driven in his work to get the pool ready and keep it going.

When it came time to fill the pool, the Bumbrys didn't even see each other except for those rare moments. It took days to fill the swimming area and Bumbry kept watch, finally turning the water off at 4 o'clock in the morning.

Others worked hard, too. Helen tells about the volunteers who just showed up to do "whatever they could." Bumbry said people he had never met arrived when it was time to paint the facility. Young people took lifeguard training and six are now qualified to watch over the swimmers.

Helen looks out at Tyson Rudd, one of the lifeguards, and says what a sweet young man he is now. With a laugh she recalls he was quite a terror as a youngster. She remembers him and scores of others from her 27 years with the school system — part of it in the classroom and part as a bus driver.

"When you've driven a school bus, nothing surprises you," she says. Her grin tells more than her words.

"I love working with the kids," she says. That comes in handy at the pool where she is surrounded by children.

One of those children approached Helen for help with a problem recently. The youngster had been told that he couldn't come back to the pool for a few days because of his misbehavior. Helen went with the child to talk with the lifeguard, but then left the temporary banishment in place.

"I can't be over-ruling the lifeguards," she says. "They've got to have the authority to keep order."

Bumbry is sitting in the afternoon shade beside the building as a pair of young girls trot by, giggling and teasing each other. One is black and the other is white. Bumbry points them out and says there has been a nearly even ratio between black and white swimmers most of the summer. He and Helen have gotten calls asking if it is a black pool. They don't taken offense at such questions, but quickly explain that this is a "community pool."

"This is the beginning of something great, not the ending," Bumbry says. "It's something for the whole city of Quincy, not just this neighborhood, but the whole city."

"This pool means if we come together with commitment and dedication and caring we'll bring the city together as a people, not as different races."

Helen expresses sadness that Bill Black did not live to see the pool completed. She wants to see a plaque put up at the pool in memory of the man who envisioned the facility after seeing children swimming in the Mississippi River because they didn't have any place better to swim. Helen also tells of her respect for Ann Black, who has quietly said that stories should not focus on her or the couple's donation, but on those now organizing the pool.

Bumbry says the spirit of giving and hard work has been contagious. Groups are planning cookouts, dances and bake sales to raise money for pool operations. Some have talked about enclosing the pool, building a gym next to it, or putting in rooms that could be used for meetings or classes.

"It's a blessing," Bumbry says.

Helen says that during the recent Quincy Homecoming, lots of those who came back to town for the reunion were awed by the pool. Some have promised to donate toward an operations fund.

The Girls Club

I met Earlene Mosby through our various women's clubs. Earlene was a member of the Martha King Majors Club, and I was a member of the Ladies Standard Review Club. There was a total of four clubs in Quincy at that time. We really got to know each other through our club affiliations.

When we went to a meeting at the state level, they had girls' clubs. They asked, "Why don't you start a girls club?" We thought about it and invited girls that we knew - start with what and who you know.

In 1981, Earlene and I started the Young Achievers Girls Club. We had four girls that stayed with the club until they graduated from high school.

The club had a president, and they conducted and led their meetings and attended district meetings. We were only there to supervise. One year, we had an induction service and the girls all had to wear white for service. Their dad, grandfather, or a friend walked them down to be introduced.

They went from a local club to the state, where they had to demonstrate skills in the areas of fashion, talent, and oratorial. They had to memorize their entire speech.

If they won at the state level they'd advance to the regionals; and if they won at the regional level, they would advance to nationals, held every other year. Mr. John Johnson, who was the owner of *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines would give the winners \$5,000.

At one time, a car dealer loaned us a van to take the girls to competitions. Sometimes there were so many girls that we would have to rent a van. Ten to twelve girls was the ideal number to have in the club. If you get too many girls, it's more challenging and difficult to make it work.

During the national graduation ceremony, the girls had to wear long white gowns. The boys who took part had to wear a tuxedo or dark suit. They all had to tell where they were going to college or what they planned to do after graduation.

The club traveled to East St. Louis, Missouri, and Alton, Decatur, and Springfield, Illinois. At the national level we traveled to Denver, Michigan, Philadelphia, Detroit, Wisconsin, and Ohio.

After Ben got sick and was in the hospital for extended periods of time, I had to give up supervising the club.

Unsung Heroines

Two extraordinary Quincy women deserve recognition of their work with young girls

TWO Quincy women accepted a national Unsung Heroines Award last week for founding and supervising a club for girls — changing the world one person at a time.

Earlene Mosby and Helen Bumbry set out in 1980 to establish the Young Achievers Club as a positive experience for African American girls. Their approach was to give the girls the authority, the responsibility and the work that comes with running the club.

The women were somewhat surprised, even somewhat embarrassed, by the attention. In news interviews they downplayed their own roles, yet others spoke up to tell what a vital impact they have.

Marissa Clark, a 17-year-old Quincy High School junior, is president of both state and regional chapters of the Young Achievers. In that capacity she presides over meetings, speaks as part of the annual state convention and tries to balance the challenges of school, church and club activities.

"They're role models," Clark said of Mosby and Bumbry. "They are respected by the girls and they do a good job of teaching us."

Since the girls conduct their own meetings, that teaching includes parliamentary procedure and public speaking. The girls are required to wear dresses at club functions. Clark said members also are required to show respect for each other and for those around them. Self-reliance is taught by requiring that girls who travel to the state convention raise money for travel and room expenses.

The women's approach is working. Girls from the club have a higher than average interest in attending college.

Former Young Achievers include educators, business women, legal and medical professionals. And as those girls grow into women, they often stop by for visits with Bumbry, Mosby or 82-year-old Emma Hickman, another club supervisor.

In her letter of nomination, Jacqui Bevelheimer noted that the Women's Issues Network of Quincy unanimously endorsed Bumbry and Mosby for the award. They were described in that letter as "two extraordinary Quincyans who have worked tirelessly to break down the barriers of sexism and racism for local African American girls."

Sen. Dick Durbin presented the national award to Bumbry and Mosby in Washington, D.C., on Thursday. "You are role models who have made significant contributions in your community. The Young Achievers of Quincy ... sounds like a program with the ability to have a tremendous positive impact in the development of young girls," Durbin said.

Mosby clarified that somewhat. She says club members are taught to be "young ladies."

These accomplishments of Bumbry and Mosby are impressive enough, but they don't tell the whole story. Both women are volunteers at the Jackson Lincoln Pool and at the Redmon and Lee Community Center and at their church.

Modesty keeps Earlene Mosby and Helen Bumbry from proclaiming their own accomplishments, and perhaps that is as it should be. Fortunately, their success can be measured in the lives they have touched — lives that tell their story in ways mere words cannot.



From left to right, Melzia Bumbry (Helen's mother-in-law), Helen Bumbry, and Marie Robbins (Helen's mother)

Quincyan to receive award for work with local youth

By Deborah Gertz Husar

Herald-Whig Staff Writer

Helen Bumbry sees giving of her time and talent as a way of serving God.

"It's doing what He would want you to do: Helping people," Bumbry said.

Bumbry's work extends beyond her church, First Baptist, into the community with her long-time supervisory role with the Young Achiever Girls Club of Quincy and other efforts.

Some would say it's a valiant effort on Bumbry's part, and she'll be recognized this week with the Valiant Woman Award presented by Church Women United. The award presentation takes place at 1 p.m. Friday at Vermont Street United Methodist Church, Eighth and Vermont.

"It's a great honor that they would pick me for it and think I was deserving," Bumbry said.

The award, presented annually, recognizes someone who has worked in church and community efforts, said Jacobi Schnelle, who chairs the award committee with Betty C. Wiewel.

"She's worked with children and youth. She did a real excellent job of being president of Church Women United here in Quincy," Schnelle said. "She's a lovely person."

Working with young people to help them achieve their goals is a priority for Bumbry. "Some think I can't do this or that. You keep telling them you can," Bumbry said. "It's rewarding to you to know you're helping somebody."

Bumbry and Earlene Mosby in 1980 founded the Young Achiever club, sponsored by the National Association of Colored Women Clubs, to focus on mentoring, educational achievement, good citizenship and developing life skills.

"When kids first get into the club, they don't want to get up in front of people. By the time they finish, they're anxious to get in front of people," she said. "When you work with them, you see how they progress."

Seeing club members graduate from high school and go onto college is rewarding — and so is the occasional thank you.

Big Picture

THE SPOONFUL RULE

When my kids were growing up, they had to eat a spoonful of whatever was cooked. If they didn't like it after that, they didn't have to eat it. They liked almost everything. Robbin was like the kid from the commercial about Mikey; he ate everything. He ended up being 6'7" and weighed 225 pounds.

They tease me because I'm the shortest person in the family at 5'5". Ben was 6'2" and he always wanted to be 6'5". There are tall people throughout both sides of our families. My grandson is 6'10" and didn't play a sport. My great-grandson is two years old and is the same height as his sister that's five years old. He is going to be tall like his parents.

WHAT EVERY KID SHOULD LEARN

My adult kids never lived at home for free. After they graduated high school or college and were working, they had to pay rent. I told them, "When you live in an apartment you have to pay rent; you might as well learn now."

When they were small, we had them start a savings account at the bank. I told them, like my parents told me, "You keep a job and a roof over your head." That is always what I always instilled in the kids.

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**ALWAYS HAVE ENOUGH MONEY THAT
WHEREVER YOU GO, YOU HAVE ENOUGH
MONEY TO GET BACK HOME.**

MEMORABLE QUOTE FROM MOM

My mom never cursed, but when she told us to do something and we weren't doing it, she would say, "Time's a' passin', why you assin".



Four generations of Helen's family, standing, left to right, Smithy Robbins, Ben Bumbry Jr., Helen Bumbry, Tyrone Bumbry, Ben Bumbry III, Sharon Bumbry (former wife of Ben III), seated left to right, Cynthia M. Bumbry, Jared Bumbry (grandson), Linda Bumbry (Tyrone's former wife)

MOST GRATEFUL FOR

In life, I am most grateful for my kids and my husband.

BEING HAPPY WITH YOURSELF IS KEY

I believe that you have to be happy to have a good life. You have to be happy with yourself as well as with the people around you. I also think that you have to be kind to people. I learned to be happy with what I have and who I'm around.

Ben said, "When I met you, you didn't talk at all, and now you talk too damn much." I will go somewhere and see somebody, and we'll stand there and talk.

When I'd be in public with my grandkids they would say, "Okay, we're going to count how many people she sees that she knows."

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HAPPINESS IS BEING HAPPY WITH WHO YOU ARE. I AM HAPPY WITH WHO I AM. I REALLY AM.

Most of all I am happy with my kids. I don't think I could have better kids. And everybody talks about that, what good kids they are.

ADVICE FOR A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

Throughout the years we had our spats. We raised two of my cousins, Carl and Althia. When I talked to Altheia, she said that she never saw us argue. She said, "I never saw you arguing in all the time you guys have been married." When Ben and I really got upset, we got in the car and there was a certain spot we would go, sit, and talk it out.

We didn't always agree, but most of the time we did agree. If I bought some clothing and he didn't like it, I wasn't going to wear it.

Ben's side of the family are the nicest people you would ever want to meet. I feel like family, not like an in-law. His family has always accepted me, and my family has always accepted him. He used to say that his mom stood up for me and I always said that my mom and dad stuck up for him, as they always said he was right and I was wrong! Both sides of the family always got along.

I think that's one of the reasons why we had such a long marriage, because the families got along so well. When the kids got older, for Christmas, we

would load the gifts and clothing in the car and spend Christmas with Ben's family in St. Louis. The next year, we would spend Christmas with my parents in Quincy. We alternated both Thanksgiving and Christmas between the grandparents in Quincy and St. Louis.

The first five years of our marriage were hard. I told Ben that I was going to leave him! I told him, "We are going to get a lawyer. We are getting a divorce!" The lawyer said, "Go to a counselor." We have had little petty issues over the years. We went to the counselor and we were married for a total of 61 years.

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**I GUESS IF YOU LOVE
SOMEONE, YOU ARE
GOING TO STAY WITH
THEM. I ALWAYS
LOVED HIM.**



Helen and Ben



Helen's 85th birthday celebration, pictured with her family

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**IN LIFE, I AM MOST GRATEFUL FOR MY
KIDS AND MY HUSBAND. -HELEN**



**Memoirs
by
Maureen**

Life Storyteller, Maureen Klues