



Lula Mae McKinney Alston

Mrs. Lula Alston is 86 years young, a longtime resident of Chapel Hill, and has spent many of those years helping others. This includes working faithfully in the service of her community and church. She is an active citizen of the community, with a spirit of love, kindness and helpfulness.

Born in Alamance Co., she married Mr. Charlie J. Alston of Chatham Co. and moved to Chapel Hill in 1952, and has three children: Diana C. Alston, Cynthia Alston-Johnson and Mitchell Alston. Her husband passed away in 1990. In her early days in Chapel Hill she worked various jobs in town, waitressing at Danziger's Old World Restaurant, at the Marsh Tailor Shop, and working in the home of Rabbi Efraim Rosenzweig. In 1955 she attended DeShazor's Beauty System, Inc. school in Durham, and became a licensed cosmetologist. For a few years she worked at the Aesthetic Beauty Salon on Franklin St, where she was the 1st licensed black stylist to work in a shop serving an all white clientele. During this time, the civil rights struggle was in full swing and Lula remembers witnessing and participating in the protest and marches that happened outside the Salon.

Following her career in beauty, Mrs. Alston went to work at the UNC Hospitals (NC Memorial Hospital) as a nursing assistant in 1966. She trained and worked in various wards and clinics, including the Emergency Room and OB-GYN clinics. She obtained a Certified Nursing Assistant 2 certification, and worked for 25 years in caring service to her patients. Lula says that “working with patients taught me to listen and be patient with suffering persons.” She celebrated her retirement from UNC Hospitals in 1992.

Upon her retirement, Lula’s service to church and community really blossomed! She has been an active member of the Chapel Hill Second Baptist Church, since 1954. She is also an active member of the Seymour Center, and was a member of the Center’s Design/Planning Committee, and helped formulate design ideas and needs for the then new Seymour Center.

She is a member of many local groups and organizations. She is currently President of District 4 of the Golden Age Happy Circle, a member of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Group Women of Distinction, and a volunteer at the Volunteers Connect 55+ Friend to Friend program. She has also volunteered in the past with the Interfaith Council. She is also a member of the Court of Calanthe Lodge 618, which donates blankets to the Men’s Shelter in Chapel Hill. Her experience as a leader in these groups has taught her to “take time to listen to what the group has to say.”

One of the things that Lula really enjoys and that helps keep her so healthy and active is bowling! She practices and bowls weekly with a team from Durham called “Warm in Durham” which is made up of Seniors age 55 and up.

Mrs. Lula M. Alston is a shining example that life can be rich and rewarding especially after retirement. She believes in staying active, engaged in life and keeping a positive attitude. We believe she truly embodies the spirit of the Chapel Hill Historical Society’s Town Treasures Award.