

June: The Triple High School Graduates

By Emma Jackson

As I contemplated on what to write about on the topic of "June" my thoughts turned to the events that happened in June for me that changed my life forever in June. One is described in this writing:

It was June 8, 1956, the date of my high school graduation. It was a triple graduation celebration for my parents and family. My twin brothers, Council and Walter, 1-½ years older, and I graduated the same year.

There is a story behind that happening. At age six my brothers started to school in "primer" grade. That meant first grade back then in segregated schools in northern Alabama where we lived. My Aunt Etta (Dad's Sister), the teacher, told my parents to send me on to school with my brothers. She apparently knew that there was no great interest or effort by district school officials to check records for age compliance for entering school at that time.

It may have been assumed that most children entering school lacked such records because many were delivered at home by Mrs. Brown the self-learned mid-wife in the small town of Decatur and surrounding rural areas. Parents were responsible for sending to Montgomery, Alabama, Vital Statistics for birth records. There was, however, one Black (Negro) physician, Dr. Newlyn Cashin, who delivered babies in homes also because he was not allowed hospital privileges. It may have been a possibly unattainable task for him to deliver all the babies and take care of other minor medical issues in the community of Black families. Therefore, there is no record of complaint by him or in the community about Mrs. Brown's practice at the time.

So, my parents took Aunt Etta's suggestion, I was enrolled with my brothers and the three of us started school together. We remained at the same grade level, often in the same classroom, through elementary and high school, thus the "triple" graduation experience for parents, brothers and me.

Prior to graduation my Dad, while sitting at the family breakfast table one morning said to each of us: "Do you want to go to college? If you want to go I will try to send you." Council and I said yes. Walter said he wanted to farm the land with him (Dad). It had to be quite an obligation on Dad's part to suggest such an opportunity.

My brother Council and I entered Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University), a private Black College in Tuskegee, Alabama. My B.S. Nursing Degree was accomplished in four academic years with three summers included. Council went into Industrial Arts and Carpentry, becoming an accomplished builder.

Aunt Etta, my primer grade teacher is the last living close relative on my Dad's side. She turned 100 years, July 29, 2017. She is quite lucid in thought and coherent in speech! We will celebrate 101 years this July, 2018!