Arkansas Democrat Gazette

Edith Lucile King Flakes

'Was no such thing as can't' for musician

BY LARRY AULT
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Edith Lucile King Flakes, a music teacher and minister of music for the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church in Little Rock, spent her life using her talents and skills to become the "consummate musician, teacher-professional."

"Hard work, discipline, and study were no strangers" to her, associates recalled when she retired.

Flakes, 84, who died Thursday of complications of diabetes and congestive heart failure, taught at several schools, including Arkansas Baptist College until 1956 and the Arkansas School for the Blind until 1978.

After graduating from Dunbar High School and attending Dunbar Junior College in the early 1930s, she attended the Washington Conservatory of Music in Washington, D.C., and the Howard University School of Music from 1936-1939.

At each institution she was in the top 10 percent of her class.

Later on she did postgraduate work at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Wis., and the George Peabody College for Teachers at Nashville, Tenn.

Flakes, the daughter of William F. and Marguerite Morris King of Little Rock, never forgot that "each one should teach one."

For more than 40 years, she trained, prepared and presented hundreds of piano students at recitals.

During her teaching career, she was a classroom teacher, college choir accompanist and choir director.

Her role as a teacher was surpassed only by community service.

On April 25, 1926, she was baptized by her pastor, Dr. D.B. Gaines.

Flakes became the pianist at her Sunday School and the Baptist Young People's Union at Mount Pleasant Baptist Church at age 12. She served from 1926 until 1934.

After two years at the Washington Conservatory of Music, she enrolled at the Howard University School of Music.

The Progressive Club 6 presented her in her first piano and organ recital in 1936.

Flakes married Lester Amos Flakes in October 1942. They were married for 51 years until his death in 1994.

Alice Flakes of Little Rock, her daughter, said that her mother often had as many as 20 students during her retirement years, down from the 40 piano students she had in 1995 when she retired.

"There was no such thing as 'can't,'" her daughter said. "Anyone who came across Edith knew that for her there was no such thing as 'can't.'"

Flakes taught as many as 1,000 students in her home.

She was a pioneer, "a liberated woman" before the term became common.

"She and her husband had an understanding," Alice Flakes said.

Marguerite E. Flakes of Oklahoma City, another daughter, said that "even after 80 years people were still calling. They wanted to get into her classes. She had a fantastic program."

Flakes taught music, affiliated with the Sherwood School of Music at Chicago.

"She was just a woman who exposed young people to a wealth of music genre," she said.