

Floyd W. Alston: Man of God, executive, civic leader, volunteer, deacon, businessman, social worker, premiere citizen.

There is neither time nor space to illuminate all that Floyd Alston achieved in his lifetime, but pause we must to reflect upon who he was. Threading his adult life was a continuum of service, leadership, enabler, doer, faithful family man and servant of the underserved. His moral compass directed his interests and his talents toward helping those less fortunate, thus giving hope and dignity to those most in need of support.

Born October 23, 1925, Floyd W. Alston was the second of two children born to Isaac Floyd Alston and Goldie Benton Alston in the borough of Brooklyn, New York. He was a graduate of Philadelphia's Northeast High School and Temple University, earning his bachelor's degree in Business Administration in 1970. Additionally, Floyd attended the Franklin School of Science and Arts where he received his license as a Certified Medical Technician, and he also matriculated in Graduate Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, Fels Institute of State and Local Government.

At the onset of World War II, Floyd was among the first African American Marines to serve his country. The unit, an all African American detachment created by executive order of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1941, trained at Montford Point, North Carolina until President Truman's order to desegregate the armed forces in 1949. These brave men served with honor, distinction and pride despite the harshness of discrimination existing at the time. Floyd honorably served two tours of duty, one in the South Pacific and one during the Korean War. In May, 2012 he was one of 402 marines still living (out of 19,168 who served) who received Congress' highest civilian honor: the Congressional Gold Medal. Although this recognition was late, it was well deserved.

After his service in the Marine Corps, a pursuit of pharmacy at Howard University was interrupted when his sister was widowed with two small children. Floyd's devotion to his family remained unwavering and he continued to be an important influence in the lives of his nieces and nephews into adulthood.

Floyd Alston has been referred to as the personification of community service. His unique skills and interests began to gain public attention in 1984 when the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations granted him their Annual Human Rights Award in recognition of his volunteer work for disadvantaged families while carrying out his professional responsibilities for public housing as a Vice President of the Board of the Philadelphia Housing Development Corporation. For ten years, as project manager with the Philadelphia Housing Authority, he oversaw the projects east of Broad Street in North Philadelphia, among them Richard Allen Homes, the city's largest. At that time, Floyd used to say, "when public housing worked." His concern for Philadelphia's less fortunate led him to HOPE (Housing Opportunities Program with Education), a private housing development agency which afforded first-time home ownership to low-income families, where he served as president. Additionally, he was a founding member of Jones Memorial Community Development Corporation which specialized in affordable rent for low-income families and served as president and a member of its Board for 20 years. As a result of his expertise in finances and management, many of Philadelphia's poorest residents found new dignity and restored hope, and were able to say, "this is my home." Floyd brought his leadership skills to serve as president of Community Services Planning Council of Southeastern Pennsylvania and to the offices of the Union Benevolent Association, a private foundation serving the poor and needy.

Floyd gained financial expertise in the banking industry where his 19 years of employment culminated in a position as Vice President and Director of Community Relations at First Pennsylvania Bank. As a bank officer he initiated an Adopt-A-School program and supported Young Audiences, the United Way and Affirmation Action. Further, his concern about the ill-preparedness of many job applicants led to his commitment to the education and nurturing of young people about to enter the corporate world. For five years he mentored and coached new employees and also taught Business courses at Community College of Philadelphia.

Appointed to the Board of Education by former Mayor Wilson Goode, Floyd Alston served from 1989 to 1999. During his tenure, he served as Vice President and twice as Board President, chaired the Education Committee and numerous subcommittees,

thus helping to shape educational policies for thousands of children attending the Philadelphia Public Schools. He worked tirelessly, giving unlimited time to address the many difficult problems facing the school district and improving the educational experiences for all the city's children. Truly, he was a role model as he exemplified excellence and worked diligently on their behalf. For Floyd, this was a labor of love. In recognition of his presidency and uncompromising commitment to the children and families of Philadelphia, his portrait was dedicated and hung in the board room of the School District of Philadelphia in June, 1996.

After a career in banking, retirement plans for Floyd were redirected with a call from Dr. Bernard Watson, President of the William Penn Foundation, a Philadelphia based foundation. He had been identified as the person to direct a \$26 million dollar broad-based plan to "change the lives" of the occupants in a concentrated area of North Philadelphia which had deteriorated and declined as a result of the chaos of the 1960's riot. While Floyd may have moved from this neighborhood in adulthood, it never left his spirit. Thus, in 1990, Floyd became the first President and CEO of the initiative that became known as the Beech Corporation. Under his direction and vision evolved a "total comprehension community revitalization" which has included educational/training programs, social services, new and rehabilitation housing programs including construction of a facility that houses Head Start, an infant-toddler day-care program, classrooms, and a summer camp. More recently, a partnership with Temple University's main campus revitalization project has provided an apartment complex for Temple students. Vital to this project coming to fruition was the first five years Floyd spent earning the trust of the community. With his focused, hands-on, unpretentious, affable style he gained their confidence. All vested view points were brought to the table to discuss quality of life issues. Later, the Cecil B. Moore Consortium was created, dedicated to a holistic approach to community development and the empowerment of its residents. After five years of funding by the William Penn Foundation, Beech became independent and renamed Beech Interplex, Inc. and remained dedicated to being a catalytic agency for community growth and change. On June 1, 2005, the 15th Anniversary of Beech Interplex, Floyd retired as president & CEO, gratified that his toil had laid the groundwork for continued success. Floyd loved his North Philadelphia neighborhood. He loved his city of Philadelphia and worked passionately as an enabler for its citizens.

Without question, Floyd W. Alston touched many lives: civically, socially, professionally and personally. His deep insight and understanding of finances and management, combined with his gifts of compassion and integrity rendered him a tireless leader who stood at the forefront of services to the poor, homeless and the sometimes forgotten people of his city. Much of this was achieved through his numerous volunteer activities. To name a few, in addition to his service on the School Board, Floyd was a founding member, President and Director of Tucker House, a 180-bed skilled nursing home; Treasurer of the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum; Treasurer and member of the board of the Philadelphia Tribune newspaper; and member of the Children's First Fund. For years, Floyd was affiliated with the oldest African American Bank, Berean Federal Savings Bank, serving as Vice Chairman as well as serving as President of the Tribune Charities. He was chairman of BAS Consolidated, Inc., a business consulting firm, and National President of Frontiers International, Inc., a historic national service organization of business and professional persons. Floyd loved the Wagner Free Institute of Science and helped to facilitate free science education for children in the city.

Recognized for his dedication and uncommon commitment to Philadelphia and its most vulnerable citizens, Floyd has received countless awards from a variety of organizations, among them: the Founders Humanitarian Coalition that presented to Floyd its first Founders Humanitarian Award; the Associates Member Trailblazer Award and the Chairman's Exemplary Service Award from the National Bankers Association; the Legion of Honor Award from the Chapel of Four Chaplains; the Leadership Gifts Chairman Award from the Boy Scouts of America; the Philadelphia Scholars Fund; the Community Services Planning Council; Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc.; Philadelphia Martin Luther King, Jr., Association; Cecil B. Moore Business Association; the Men's Club of the Grace Baptist Church of Germantown; as well as being an inductee into the Germantown Historical Society's Hall of Fame. Moreover, Floyd was the recipient of The Diamond Award for Community Service "in recognition of his tenacious leadership in building and revitalizing

Philadelphia communities, by engaging creative strategies, successful collaborations, advocacy and partnerships in the finest tradition of public service."

Floyd was not one to limit his time, style and talent exclusively to civic endeavors. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Avenue of the Arts, Inc. and Chairman of the Philadelphia Clef Club of Jazz and Performing Arts, Inc. Floyd also was a member Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc., Sigma Pi Phi - Alpha Boule, the Philadelphia Mules, and an emeritas member of the Philadelphia Commissioners. One of Floyd's favorite pastimes was the brief but enjoyable stint of performing as a male model in his sister-in-law's fashion shows. He modeled his own clothes and his debonair flair always made him a huge success.

It must be noted that busy though he was nurturing other people's lives and hopes and dreams, Floyd remained constant to his source of faith. Throughout his life, he was an ardent, participating church member. He served for 20 years as a trustee of Jones Memorial Baptist Church, where his family members were founders. He subsequently joined Grace Baptist Church of Germantown where he was a member of the diaconate and chaired the Grace Community Development Corporation.

On the occasion of its May, 2008 commencement ceremony, Temple University gave special recognition to Floyd for his deep commitment to the vitality of North Central Philadelphia by conferring the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters. Lauding him as having been "a catalyst for the kind of change that makes a real difference in the daily lives of Philadelphians," former Temple President Ann Weaver Hart continued, "in conveying Temple's highest honor, we will pay fitting tribute to Mr. Alston's remarkable accomplishments as a business visionary, neighborhood developer and public servant." "Mr. Alston was the most effective, organized, committed, respected and selfless community leader of the past generation in North Central Philadelphia," added former Temple President Peter J. Liacouras.

Transcending all of his accomplishments, accolades and awards however, was Floyd's abiding devotion to his family whom he loved faithfully and completely. Joined in matrimony in 1950 to the former Marilyn Baker, the couple, in September, 2012 celebrated 62 years of their commitment to each other as friends, as lovers, as soul mates. From this union two children were born: son, Craig E.F. Alston and daughter, M. Suzanne Alston Hodges, both of whom are attorneys. Enhancing family happiness was the addition of son-in-law, Keith L. Hodges and the births of their grandchildren Cameron Isaac Alston Hodges, born in 2000, and Kendall Ann Baker Hodges, born in 2002. In turn, his family loved and took great pride in him and his many achievements. As he accomplished each feat, his very wise mother-in-law, Maude Baker, would quote her own special form of praise:

"The heights of great men, reached and kept, were not obtained by sudden flight, but they while their companions slept were toiling upward in the night."

So this is who he was, Floyd W. Alston, a man of conscience and conviction who loved and respected his fellow man. He loved life! He loved to dance, to laugh, to entertain and to travel. He loved his friends and their children. He loved tackling new challenges, especially those thought to be insurmountable. He loved the joy of music, and above all else he loved His Lord!

