

AN INTERVIEW —

# Whatever happened to Dr. Eva B. Dykes?

By: Clarence E. Hodges II

As I stand in view of our six-year old library here on campus, I become dismayed with the fact that a majority of Oakwood students are not acquainted with the one for whom the building was named--Dr. Eva B. Dykes, the first black female to qualify and receive a Ph.D. Because of the usual custom of naming college halls after deceased persons, many are under the impression that this pioneer woman is no longer with us.

This is quite the contrary. The active octogenarian (woman in her eighties) was present to give a speech of gratitude on the inaguration of the library in 1973.

After her subsidence from a busy life, this spry little woman still finds time to write weekly articles for the Message Magazine. She lives in a small, but quaint yellow-frame house behind Blake Center on Oakwood Road. I was compelled to probe Dr. Dykes (no relation to Professor James Dykes) with questions on her background. Here is the outcome of the interview:

ironing clothes in my apartment and she came to help me. I thought that was so sweet of her.

**Q.** Give some comparisons between the Oakwood of then and now.

**A.** Oakwood at that time was very appealing to me for it was more of a rustic (country) setting. The campus started at East Hall, where I used to live; and the entrance was a lovely arch

with a rose at the top. The campus was known for its roses. We had many roses. I feel Oakwood has improved in the buildings and faculty. I think the students are rather nice too.

**Q.** What words of encouragement do you have for aspiring students at Oakwood.

**A.** I was taught from a child to do my best in any undertaking whether I liked it or

not. The satisfaction of doing my best brings a greater reward than the actual accomplishment of my aim.

Ph.D.?

**A.** Well, after graduating from Howard, I taught at a university and decided to work on my doctorate at Radcliffe.

**Q.** Isn't that one of the nation's exclusive Ivy League colleges?

**A.** Yes, but I attended a female branch of that school for at that time women were not allowed to study with Radcliffe men. There were two other black women who were candidates for Ph.D.'s. One was Sadie Alexander Mosell and the other was the late Georgiana Simpson. I was the first to receive a Ph.D. in English in 1921. My dissertation was on "The Pope and his influence in America 1715-1850."

**Q.** Is it true that you were the professor of many prominent black figures?

**A.** Yes, I taught Charles Drew, a pioneer in blood plasma and the first black governor of the Virgin Islands--William Hasty. I taught Cortex Peters, a champion typists. I also taught President Rock.

**Q.** When did you come to Oakwood College?

**A.** I came here in 1944 by the request of J. L. Moran. I remember the incidents that led to my coming. Inez Booth came to Washington D. C. to encourage me to teach at Oakwood. I was