

10:55

I: Interviewer

D: Eva Beatrice Dykes

I: What is your full name?

D: Eva Beatrice Dykes

I: Where do you live?

D: At Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama.

I: Where were you born?

D: In Washington, D. C.

I: What is your occupation?

D: Teaching.

I: How long have you been in public service?

D: Approximately forty-nine years. One year as teacher of English and Latin at Walden University in Nashville, Tennessee (incidentally this school no longer exists); eight years as teacher of English at Dunbar High School in Washington, D. C.; thirteen years at Howard University, Washington, D. C.; twenty-four years at Oakwood College, Huntsville, Alabama. At the end of this time, I retired and went to Gordonsville, Virginia to live. In 1968 I was called back to Oakwood to assist in the English Department. I taught for three years: two years full time and one year as a part-time teacher.

I: What schools have you attended?

D: I first went to the teacher-training school at Howard University as a first-grade pupil. I received my training in grades five through eight at the Lucretia Mott School in Washington, D. C. Then I went to M Street High School, later known as Dunbar High School. Then I went to Howard University where I received a B.A. Degree, *summa cum laude*.

I: Did you receive any honors at Howard University?

D: I graduated from Howard University *summa cum laude*.

I: Where did you study after this?

D: I received a B. A.; M.A.; and Ph.D. from Radcliffe College.

I: Did you receive any honors from this school?

D: I graduated *magna cum laude*.



I: This was a remarkable accomplishment to receive a Bachelor's Degree and a Master's Degree from Radcliffe, one of the Nation's exclusive ivy league colleges. What year did you complete your doctorate?

D: The doctorate was conferred in 1921. In March of 1921, I completed the requirements for the Ph.D. degree.

I: You were the first black woman in the United States to finish the requirements for the doctorate, but you were one of three first Negro women awarded the Ph.D. in 1921, were you not?

D: Yes. I may say that I was the first black woman to receive the doctorate in English. The other recipients of the doctorate were Georgianna Simpson from the University of Chicago, and Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander from the University of Pennsylvania.

Although I was the first to complete my work for the Ph.D degree in Cambridge, Massachusetts at Radcliffe, I happened to be the last to receive the degree because commencement exercises were held later at Radcliffe than the exercises for the other two colleges where the other women attended.

I: What particular subjects were you studying?

D: *Among some of the courses taken were*  
~~At Howard I specialized in~~ English, Latin, German and Greek. (?)

I: You became a member of Phi Beta Kappa?

D: Yes, the Iota Chapter.

I: When did you leave Howard University to teach in Alabama at Oakwood College?

D: In 1944.

I: Are you Professor Emeritus of the college faculty?

D: Yes.

I: What articles and books have you written?

D: I have written articles for the Negro History Bulletin, Journal of Negro History, Message Magazine, the Review and Herald, the Youth's Instructor. (the last three being Adventist periodicals).

I: You are the author of what books?

D: The Negro in English Romantic Thought. I also wrote in cooperation with Florence Winslow a Manual of English and cooperated with Owen Thomas of Indiana University in writing a book on linguistics. *done recently*

I also was a co-editor of a book Readings for Negro Schools and Colleges. The other co-editors were Dr. Lorezo D. Turner of Howard University, Washington, D. C., and Roosevelt University, Chicago, Illinois, and Dr. Otelia Cromwell, Supervisor of English for Divisions 10-13 in Washington, D. C.



I: Who were your parents?

D: Martha Ann Howard and James Stanley Dykes.

I: What was your father's occupation?

D: My father was principal of a school in Hagarstown, Maryland, where I lived part of my early childhood days. Later he was a government worker in Washington, D. C.

I: Did any other members of your family graduate from Howard University?

D: Yes, my father, James S. Dykes; three uncles, Floda Howard, who died before I was born; John Howard, and James Howard. My uncle, James Howard, received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1870; his M. A. from the College of Liberal Arts, and his M. D. from the School of Medicine of Howard in 1883. My uncle John Howard received his Bachelors from Howard, and also my father, James Dykes. My mother attended Howard, but had to drop out because of ill health. My sister, Florence, graduated from the Commercial College.

I: Who influenced or inspired you to achieve your higher education?

D: My uncle, Dr. James Howard. My uncle thought it would be good for me to get another Bachelor's Degree from an accredited school since Howard at that time was unaccredited. Therefore I entered Radcliffe as an unclassified student. I stayed two years at Radcliffe and received my Bachelor's in 1917. In 1918 I received my Master's, and I received my Ph.D. in 1921 while I was teaching at Dunbar High School. I was fortunate enough to receive five scholarships while I was doing graduate work at Radcliffe.

I: When did you begin teaching at Howard University?

D: In 1929, when I was invited by President Mordecai Johnson to join the faculty.

I: Who were some of the students you have taught that have achieved success?

D: Among the many students, I remember Charles Drew, pioneer in blood plasma research and former Chief Surgeon and Chief of Staff at Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D. C. I also may cite William Hastie, who in 1944 was appointed Governor of the Virgin Islands. Before that he was Dean of the Law School at Howard University. I also recall Cortez Peters who *is known as a typing champion* and Joseph Jenkins who served as a teacher in the English Department at Tuskegee Institute for some years.



I: Who were some of your colleagues at Howard University?

D: Todd Duncan, baritone singer; Alain Leroy Locke, the first colored man to be a Rhodes Scholar; Charles Wesley, former president of Wilberforce University; Ralph Bunche, Diplomat and U. N. Mediator; Ernest Just, a Biologist of unusual fame; Camille Nickerson, concert artist and teacher; and Louia Jones, a famous violinist.

I: I understand you are a musician also.

D: Since my early days I <sup>studied</sup> studies music; but I never received a degree in music. It was my avocation rather than vocation. During my life in Washington, D. C., I accompanied some well known soloists, such as Madame Florence Cole Talbert of Memphis; Lillian Evanti of Washington, D. C.; ~~Charlotte Wallace Murray, well known contralto of New York; Josephine Muse of the Washington Conservatory of Music; Louia Vaughan Jones and Wesley Howard, both skilled violinists, and Clarence Cameron White, composer and violinist.~~

I: What courses have you taught during your teaching career at Oakwood College?

D: I have taught, Freshman English, Journalism, World Literature, Remedial English, English Literature, American Literature, Renaissance Literature, Victorian Literature, Modern Literature, College Grammar, Methods in Teaching Secondary English.

I: In your basic English classes, you stressed the knowledge of the "Minimum Essentials" and "Audibility", did you not?

D: Yes. My <sup>emphasis</sup> emphasis on these two points was due to the fact that if the regular student at each educational level could master the mere objectives of the course, before he is promoted to the next level, the teacher's work could be facilitated and the student's comfort be eased. *James W. H. noted educator who said that*  
We find that some college graduates cannot read, speak, and write the English language correctly. I believe that if we stress clear and distinct speaking, we would enjoy ~~wh~~ better what we have heard.

I: Many of the students you have taught at Oakwood College have made outstanding contributions also, have they not?

D: Yes..The former president, Frank W. Hale who served the college from 1966 to 1971; two present administrators, namely, Calvin B. B. Rock, the present president, ~~and~~ Emerson A. Cooper, the Academic Dean; several faculty and staff members, as well as many religious leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, ~~were taught by me.~~



I: What honors have you received?

D: I have received a citation of excellence in recognition of outstanding contribution to the world program of Christian education. I received the Alumni Award from Howard University for the highest grade point average attended during undergraduate years. By unanimous vote of Howard University, I was selected as the best all around teacher of the faculty, and I was a recipient of the annual alumni award conferred by the Trustees of Howard University for distinguished post graduate achievement in education. There are some other awards.

I: What part did you play in the first full accreditation of Oakwood College?

D: I was Chairman of the Accreditation Committee that worked for the first full accreditation that Oakwood College received in 1958.

I: The present new library building at Oakwood College was named in your honor and dedicated in 1973, was it not?

D: Yes.

I: What is your basic philosophy of life that has enabled you to make such an outstanding contribution to black culture and achievement?

D: I have always been taught from a child to do my best in any undertaking whether I liked it or not. The mere satisfaction of doing my best brings a greater reward than the actual accomplishment of my aim.

I: One of the highlights in your life was a trip to Europe in — was it not?

D: Yes, I had many interesting experiences <sup>by visiting</sup> historical places in England, France, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, and Holland. Also, this past summer of 1975, I was privileged to be a <sup>delegated</sup> delegate to the World