

Memorial Service  
For  
Mrs. Ivestia H. Beckwith  
"Peggy"



Saturday September 21, 2013  
11:00 A.M.

First United Presbyterian Church  
201 E. 7th Street  
Charlotte, North Carolina

Reverend Dr. Gregory Busby, Officiating Minister



# The Obituary

"He who remains silent is lost forever."



Ivestia Heggie Beckwith fondly known as "Peggy," was born May 18, 1923 in Washington, N.C. to loving parents, Nelson Heggie and Queenie Elizabeth McLawhorn Heggie. From that union four children were born: Bessie, Willie Roy, Ivestia and Helen. Ivestia was the oldest living descendant of her grandparents, Bird and Lucy Hunt and the family matriarch.

As a young girl she grew up in Washington, N.C. better known then as Little Washington. She attended Washington Colored Elementary School and P. S. Jones High School for Coloreds and later attended Bennett College and Brooklyn College in New York. She completed professional studies at Miles College in Alabama, East Carolina University, Howard University, and New York University.

In the early 1940's she left North Carolina and moved to New York City where she enjoyed a successful modeling career through Sepia Arts Modeling Studios and worked for the Urban League. Her experience with the Urban League started her career endeavors understanding that being silent in the work place would not stop injustice. She fought for African American women to be included in the business and professional sectors as integral parts of the power process.

In the early 50s, she left New York and moved to Birmingham, Alabama, a focal area for the Civil Rights movement and the fight against black inequality. She quickly became involved in Birmingham's local political activities and community action to catapult change in the black community. At the time, she was very discouraged by the media's portrayal of blacks on the radio and in advertisement. She met with the radio station's manager and voiced her concerns. She provided ideas to change and improve the way blacks were portrayed in the media. After a productive meeting with the station's management, she was hired as the new disc jockey for radio station, WEDR, in Birmingham. The stations managers provided her a catchy first name that rhymed with Heggie. This was the birth of her radio name "Peggy Heggie." She enjoyed her 5:00 PM radio show, "Time for Peggy Heggie," which she used to spotlight women with a voice. She returned to New York City in the mid 50's where she remained until the early 1960's.

In 1964, she moved to Charlotte, NC and shortly thereafter married Carson H. Beckwith. She was employed at Johnson C. Smith University in the Public Relations Department where she met and became friends with Darius and Vera Swan. Her desire



to take action against inequality resurfaced as she worked in support of the Swan's landmark case, "Swan vs. Charlotte Mecklenburg Board of Education", as it moved through the legal process to the Supreme Court. This was the victory that changed the education system in our country, and certainly in our community.

In the 70's, she began to ponder the inequality of health care, specifically health disparities, in the black community. She witnessed a mother grieving over the death of her child with sickle cell disease which prompted her to seek answers.

She began her work with sickle cell seeking answers by expressing her interest to the local County Health Director, Model Cities Health Educator and two local pediatricians. This group requested that she develop a plan which resulted in the creation of the Association for Sickle Cell Disease in October 1972. Joined by Dr. George Lowe, Dr. C. W. Williams, Dr. James Murphy and later Dr. Karen Burgess the mission to provide access to healthcare and extend the life of babies in Mecklenburg County seemed to be possible. That was not enough. She joined a statewide network fight to save the lives of those born with sickle cell disease and provided the voice for the underserved in healthcare. This began her passion as a health care professional and advocate.

In 1972 she submitted a federal grant to fund the Mecklenburg County Sickle Cell program which would expand the program to include eight surrounding counties which was approved. At the inception of the program, there was a dire need for well-trained volunteers to provide basic information about the disease. She worked with the Continuing Education Department at Central Piedmont Community College, and developed a three month "Lecture Laboratory Curriculum" for volunteers which launched in 1973.

Although her major concentration for the first six years was advocacy for sickle cell disease, she began lobbying along with two other community based employees from Greensboro, N.C. and the Honorable Mickey Michaux for House Bill 32. In 1973 through state legislation House Bill 32 established the North Carolina Sickle Cell Syndrome Program and the Governor's Appointed Council on Sickle Cell Syndrome. She served on the Governor's Council for Sickle Cell Syndrome under Governors James E. Holshouser, Jr., James G. Martin and James B. Hunt from 1973 until 2001. In 1992 she was appointed by Governor James Martin to the North Carolina Governors Council for Sickle Cell Syndrome. At the national level she served as the 3rd Vice President of the Board of Directors of the National Association for Sickle Cell Disease. In 1980 she developed and piloted the Sickle Cell Disease "Sister-City Program" and Comprehensive Needs Assessment" between Charlotte, N.C. and Port au Prince, Haiti. The Program captured outstanding recognition for assistance to Haiti in advancing understanding and goodwill between the people of the United States and other countries. The Charlotte Mecklenburg program was recognized in 1978 as the model



Sickle Cell Clinic by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. For thirty-one years she served as a leader, advocate and the Executive Director of the Association for Sickle Cell Disease of Southern Piedmont. The program provided education, counseling and clinical testing to individuals affected with sickle cell diseases and other hemoglobinopathies.

She advocated for the economically poor and those affected by health disparities in Mecklenburg County. In 1981 Peggy Beckwith and four other visionaries came together and petitioned the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to establish community based centers to address healthcare inequities. In 1981, under the Sickle Cell grant, the CW Williams Community Health Center was opened to provide equal health care services to the underserved.

She felt strongly that black women should be recognized as business professionals. In 1976 she worked collaboratively with Mrs. Anna Hood on the planning and chartering of the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Charlotte Club. In April 2009 she received The National Sojourner Truth Meritorious Service Award for her outstanding community service and her deep concern for, and participation in all activities advancing the status of women.

She sought inclusion for black women by becoming one of the noted radio and media broadcasters of the 1950's. She has been included in the Smithsonian Productions, of "Black radio: Telling it like it was-The Civil Rights History Project: Survey of Collections and Repositories (The American Folklife Center, Library of Congress)." She was also recognized in the book, "Legendary Pioneer of Black Radio" by Dr. Gilbert Williams.

Ivestia "Peggy" Beckwith believed the strength of our people lies in our collective voice that speaks of ongoing change through action and commitment. Her leadership, vision, courage, competence and ability to build constituencies, set priorities, mobilize resources and promote political action served as a voice of change for our community.

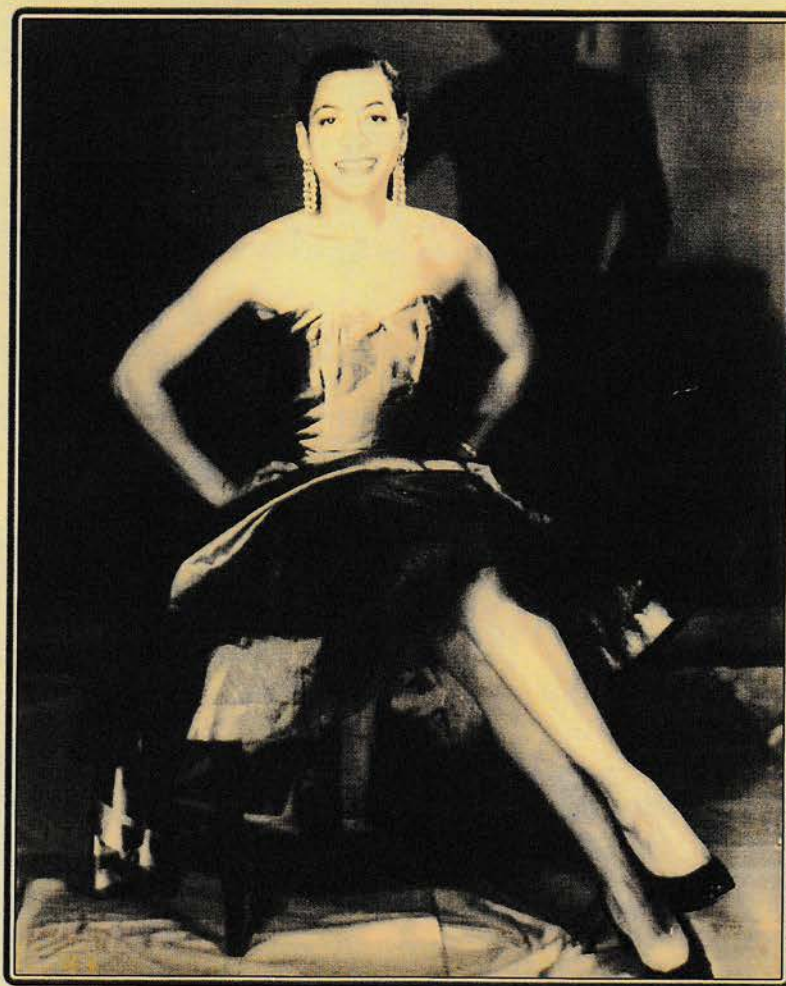
**"He who remains silent is lost forever."**

Peggy is survived by her family whom she loved dearly, daughter Dr. Deborah Maria Johnson of Atlanta Georgia, Carmar Beckwith Wade (Russell), Victoria Beckwith Graham (Tony), and Calvin Beckwith all of North Carolina, also grandchildren, great grandchildren, and a host of nieces, nephews and other loved ones.



## Flower Bearers

NANBPW



## Acknowledgements

Thank you for your unyielding love and support, words cannot begin to express our appreciation for your prayers, visits, flowers and many outpourings of love. It is an honor to have shared so many precious moments with you all, thank you for these unforgettable memories. Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers. The Beckwith Family

Donations can be made in Mrs. Peggy Beckwith's name to the following organizations:

Marie Fearing Fund  
Attn. Treasurer, Betty Durrah  
3695- F Cascade Rd #1371  
Atlanta, GA 30331

NANBPW - Charlotte Club  
P.O Box 481587  
Charlotte, NC 28269

First United Presbyterian Church  
201 E. 7th Street  
Charlotte NC 20208



Funeral Arrangement Entrusted to:

**Alexander Funeral Home Inc.**

1424 Statesville Ave.

Charlotte, NC 28206

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WILLIAMS

LEGENDARY PIONEERS OF BLACK RAD

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## LEGENDARY PIONEERS OF BLACK RADIO

GILBERT A. WILLIAMS

After World War II, when thousands of African Americans left farms, plantations, and a southern way of life to migrate north, African American disc jockeys helped them make the transition to the urban life by playing familiar music and giving them tips on how to function in northern cities. These disc jockeys became cultural heroes and had a major role in the development of American broadcasting. This collection of interviews documents the personalities of the pioneers of Black radio, as well as their personal struggles and successes. The interviewees also define their roles in the civil rights movement and relate how their efforts have had an impact on how African Americans are portrayed over the air.

