

# Tanner J. Livisay



Mrs. Tanner J. Livisay, in effect, had two careers, although both were with the West Virginia Cooperative Extension Service and both were successful because of her concern for the welfare of others.

Her “first career” began in 1941 as Home Demonstration Agent in Mercer, McDowell, and Wyoming counties and later expanded to District Home Demonstration Agent for the period 1945-62. The title is misleading because her work and responsibility covered the entire state. An associate pointed out that while the Negro Extension Program was supervised by West Virginia State College, Mrs. Livisay was probably the most influential Black woman in West Virginia.

During this period, one of her most important achievements was the organization of the State Farm and Homemakers Council, with the cooperation of the Negro Extension Agents. The organization grew to embrace the work of 13 agents in 26 counties with 1500 members in 90 clubs. Accomplishments included a five-year health plan which was coordinated by the Negro Health Office of the Federal Security Agency; a state-wide home beautification campaign; and scholarship donations to West Virginia State College and Bluefield State College in alternate years. The organization held its final meeting in 1966 when its members became associated with the West Virginia Home Demonstration Council.

Her “second career” began in 1962 when she became State Extension Specialist in Child Development and Human Relations and Assistant Professor of Home Economics at WVU, with state-wide responsibilities. In this role she developed resource materials which received national acclaim. Her packaged program teaching kit titles “Living Creatively through Middle Years” and its supplement “Men and Creative Family Living,” have been widely used. She represented the WVU Cooperative Extension Service at National Family Life Conferences held at the Merrill-Palmer Institute, Detroit, from 1963 through 1966. She was invited to participate in a Leadership Conference at the University of Vermont in 1966. And in 1965, she was cited by the Great Lakes Region of Alpha Kappa Alpha as Woman of the Year.

In her role as Extension Specialist, she participated in many state and national conferences, such as the National Conference on Aging at the University of Michigan and was a member of the West Virginia Council of the White House Conference on Children and Youth.

She earned admiration for her work to promote individual growth and development in young people as a leader of Girl Reserves, and through 4-H charting sessions in weekend conferences and county and state 4-H camps. She conducted classes in family life education throughout the state as well as leadership training classes at the Washington Carver 4-H Camp.

As an associate wrote, when she retired in 1968, “Your conduct and attitude has been an inspiration to me. We shall miss you...but you should know that I will never forget you.”