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Interviews with:  
Cortland Dugger  
Dr. Ione Vargus  
Mabray Andrews

A Tribute to the Life of:  
Madeleine Dugger Andrews  
1922 -1986

Childhood

*We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends.*

--Mary MacLeod Bethune, 1955

When Mr. And Mrs. Lieutenant Colonel Edward Dugger gave birth to their third child, on December 13<sup>th</sup> 1922, they decided to name the baby girl Madeleine. This was not a difficult decision, as the name Madeline had been in the family for years – since before their ancestors had settled in the historically African American community of West Medford, Massachusetts in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

When Madeleine was a young girl, the Duggers lived on the first floor of a three family home at 158 Jerome Street. The couple's sixth child was born in 1930, and the next year the family moved next door, into a home constructed by an African American architect especially for them.

The Dugger home was a loving one, always filled with people. Besides having six children (two sons and four daughters), the couple often rented rooms to African

American students enrolled at Tufts University and were known to hold social events in their home. Friends and family would gather and mingle – the adults playing cards and the children playing board games such as Monopoly—with the radio playing softly in the background.

The Duggers were popular in the community. Madeleine’s mother, Mrs. Dugger-Kelley, was deeply involved in several West Medford civic committees, and besides working as a postal clerk, Edward Dugger, had founded the 372<sup>nd</sup> Infantry, an all-African American National Guard Unit. This was an accomplishment that earned him a place in Black high society. As Madeleine’s youngest sister, Dr. Ione Vargus, explains, “because my father was a colonel, [our parents] had a whole set of friends that tended to be professionals - black professionals - in Boston... anybody who was anybody... This house used to be filled with people while [our] father was alive.”

Education was the focus of the Dugger family. It was a goal of Madeline Dugger Kelley that each of her children would receive a college education. She herself had fought hard against racism to be admitted into Sargent College for Physical Education (part of Boston University), and knew that even if it was difficult, her children needed to be educated as well. All throughout her adulthood, Mrs. Dugger had struggled to find employment, even as a college educated woman. She was told over and over by employers that they “Did not hire colored.” Based on her own experiences, Madeline Dugger Kelley knew that her children’s chances at success would be very limited if they did not earn degrees.

Like her mother, as a young girl Madeleine was a serious student and a passionate athlete. She earned strong grades, and was on the varsity basketball and field hockey

teams. Being a member of the local Girl Scout troop was also an important part of Madeleine's extra-curricular life. During summer break from school, Madeleine went to an overnight Girl Scout camp with her friends, playing bugle in lieu of payment.

### Adolescence and the College Years

*There is no easy walk to freedom anywhere, and many of us will have to pass through the valley of the shadow of death again and again before we reach the mountaintop of our desires.*

--Nelson Mandela, 1953

In 1939, Madeleine's father passed away from an inherited kidney condition. Colonel Dugger was 44 years old; Madeleine was only 16. The family had been on WPA assistance before Edward's death; his illness, the Depression, and Mrs. Dugger's difficulty in finding employment had all taken a toll on the family's bank account. Even though Madeleine and her siblings took on after-school jobs, money was still tight in the Dugger household.

Despite these problems, Madeleine successfully graduated from Medford High School in 1940, earning both the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Scholarship and the Progressive Club of Everett Scholarship. Unfortunately, the Dugger family's financial problems still limited Madeleine's choices for higher education.

She dreamed of training to become a Physical Education teacher at Sargent College in Boston, like her mother had before her. Even considering the scholarships she had won, however, a private education at Sargent would have been too expensive for the

family to afford. Madeleine was heartbroken, but knew that attending state college would give her the opportunity to earn a degree. Madeleine enrolled at Bridgewater State College in Bridgewater, Massachusetts, with plans to pursue a teaching degree, one of the few professions that black women were allowed to have at that time.

Then, in 1941, Madeleine's mother was finally able to find a job. She was hired as the Director of Service Clubs at Fort Devens in Ayer, Massachusetts, serving the recreational needs of Black soldiers. This was an appropriate job Mrs. Dugger-Kelley; since her husband had been a military man, she was accustomed to the atmosphere and felt comfortable there. However, this job was not taken without sacrifice. Due to the commute – which took several hours each way - Madeleine's mother was only able to return to the family's Medford home a few times a month. Mrs. Dugger-Kelley came to be known as 'Ma' to thousands of soldiers while Madeleine took on many of the mothering responsibilities back at the family's home in Medford.

Besides helping to raise her siblings, Madeleine was employed part time in local burlap bag mills, and taking classes at Bridgewater State. Her days were long: She commuted to Bridgewater because women were not allowed to live on campus. Dr. Ione Vargus recalls how hard her sister's life was during this period, "*Madeleine and our other sister Barbara caught a series of buses, so they might get up and leave here around five or six o'clock [am]. After school they used to work in the mills, so I didn't see [them] from early in the morning to late at night*".

Madeleine's time at home was scarce, but she still managed to keep good grades, hold a steady job, and kept a solid relationship with her family members. Although she was not known to be as sociable as her older sisters, Madeleine was also popular among

her peers, both as a child and in college. At Bridgewater, she was a sister of Alpha Kappa Alpha, the same African American Sorority that had presented her with a scholarship upon her graduation from Medford High School.

Even though he was several years younger than she, Madeleine was especially close to her brother Cortland, who would affectionately call his sister 'Mat'. *"We used to call [her] 'the sergeant' because even though Mat was younger than my older sister, she took over the household when there was no parental framework,"* he recalls. *"I wanted to go to West Point when I was young, [and] Matt used to sit there at the table and would tell me how I should prepare myself ... how I should improve my table manners and learn how to sit correctly and talk correctly and eat correctly and all that. She would tell me how the West Pointers would do it."*

Cortland, a World War II and Korean Conflict veteran, never attended West Point. He pursued a science career instead, but remembers these and other memories of his older sister fondly. *"We had a chicken coop out [in the yard], and Matt was the only sister that would help me with the chickens,"* he recalls. *"The others wouldn't even eat the eggs because they knew where they came from, but Matt and I would eat the eggs together and enjoy them."*

Later, when Cortland was both working and in college, he recalls how his sister selflessly supported him: *"I got out of a chemistry lab at 4:30 and I'd have to punch in at the post office at five o'clock. I had a superintendent who didn't like my going to college and he'd be standing there at the time-clock, but Matt would make sure I'd have a meal before I went in. I'd run over to her house and she'd have dinner all ready at the table...I never paid her a dime for it and she'd always have the food there".*

## Marriage and Joining the Workforce

*The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.*

-Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love*, 1963

At the age of 19, Madeleine fell in love with and married Edward Andrews, an Arkansas native and member of the 366<sup>th</sup> Infantry, at Fort Devens, the same fort at which her mother was working. Soon after the couple's marriage, Edward's unit was sent overseas. The newly-married Mrs. Andrews stayed in Medford, still attending classes at Bridgewater. Madeleine graduated from college in 1944, with a B.S. in education. Soon after, when her husband returned from serving with the US Army in Italy, the couple moved to Tacoma, Washington. Madeleine found a job teaching illiterate black infantrymen and gave birth to the couple's first son, Edward Jr.

After one year of living in Tacoma, the Andrews' returned to West Medford. The couple purchased and settled into a home on Arlington Street, close to Madeleine's childhood home. Madeleine began searching for employment, excited by the prospect of teaching in the very town in which she had grown up. She began applying for positions in Medford, only to discover that finding a job as an African American teacher would not be an easy task.

When she filed her application, Madeleine was told point blank by the Medford Schools' superintendent that he would never allow a 'Negro' teacher to obtain a permanent teaching position in his school system. Especially in a town with an African

American community as strong and as cohesive as West Medford's, this refusal was difficult for the young woman to accept. *"My mother had taught her children, 'you are an American first and a Negro second',"* stated Madeleine years later, in her School Committee candidacy acceptance speech. She continued, *"After this incident, I still felt the same, but I knew others felt that I was a Negro first and an American second."*

Despite this setback, Madeleine refused to give up her dream of being an educator. Since she still wanted to work in Medford, she accepted a job as a substitute teacher in Medford and also at the post office. Then, in 1961, at the age of 39, she accepted a permanent teaching position at East Boston High School.

### The School Committee

***The power of the white world is threatened whenever a black man refuses to accept the white world's definitions.***

--James Baldwin, 1962

In 1963, Madeleine was approached by the West Medford Improvement Association with a request. Would she be willing to represent the African American community of West Medford and run for the Medford School Committee? Madeleine seemed to the Association to be the perfect candidate. Not only were they aware of her passion for teaching and education, but her family's name would give her recognition and credibility throughout the city. As Madeleine herself stated in her committee candidacy acceptance speech, *"I am a candidate because I am an American and I believe that good education is the basis of our American way of life."*

Running for this position would be a pioneer attempt. Never before had an African American woman run for a seat on the School Committee in Medford, nor for that matter in the entire state of Massachusetts. Even though she still was barred from becoming a permanent teacher in Medford, Madeleine began to prepare her platform.

Well-liked because she was modest about her personal accomplishments, yet outspoken in her beliefs about education, Madeleine canvassed the community. She primarily advocated for the creation of what are now known as “community colleges” – schools to which adults could go to continue their education inexpensively, or to be retrained for jobs that integrated new technology. The high drop-out rate in the Medford Public School System also concerned Madeleine, and she promised to work toward improving this if elected onto the Committee. She was not only supported by the African American community of West Medford – three or four percent of the population -- but by residents of the entire city.

*“She was a great leader in a difficult time in our nation’s history; in our city’s history”* states Medford’s current Mayor, Michael McGlynn. Mayor McGlynn, a man who knew Madeleine when he was a child, continues, *“It took a tremendous amount of courage and some great leadership qualities to step forward and [run], and not only did she do that, but she won.”* Madeleine was voted onto the Medford School Committee for her first term in 1963. She was 41 years old, a wife, a mother, and a career woman.

### Motherhood and a New Career

***Good parents give their children Roots and Wings. Roots to know where home is, wings to fly away and exercise what's been taught them.***

--Jonas Salk

The first few years that she was on the school committee were particularly busy for Madeleine; not only was she raising three young sons – Edward Jr., Mabray, and Malcolm - but she was also teaching biology at East Boston High School. She somehow managed to find time for everything and everyone, however. “*Madeleine was an excellent wife and an excellent mother,*” recalls Cortland. “*She always gave more than she ever received.*”

Madeleine’s middle son Mabray vividly remembers the trips he and his mother would take together when he was a child. “*We used to go to museums like the Museum of Science,*” he recalls. “*I love[d] to go there. And we’d go to the planetarium. And I remember we went to the Isabella Stewart Gardner museum and I didn’t realize so much all that I was seeing but I did acquire an appreciation for art.*” These mother-son trips have led Mabray (who now sings in a regional church choir) to have a lifelong interest in the arts. He has also passed this passion on to his daughter, who enjoys both painting and writing.

Known by Mabray as ‘his greatest cheerleader’, Madeleine urged all her sons to get themselves engaged in extra-curricular activities and to study hard. “*She encouraged me to get involved in track and field and get involved in the boy scouts,*” recalls Mabray. “*She was always encouraging of that kind of stuff or anything that was positive. She made sure that every one of her boys took piano lessons.*”

On the weekends and during the summer, the Andrews' also went on day-outings with the entire extended family. *"We had lots of family who lived around here and we used to pile into cars and station wagons and we used to go up to our favorite beach and go swimming there,"* Mabray recalls.

Above all else, Madeleine wanted her sons to enjoy their childhoods. Even though she knew they would one day have to face racism, she dealt with the issue in a similar manner as had her mother. *"She wanted me to have an innocent childhood and wanted me to be a kid and not a Black kid and not any other kind of kid,"* explains Mabray. Recalling the family trips the Andrews would take to his father's hometown in Arkansas, Mabray describes his innocence, *"I didn't realize until later that we were in the bastion of segregation because my mom shielded me from it and my Dad didn't say anything"*

He continues, *"I now realize how dangerous those trips were... But then when we got down there and we had segregated swimming pool and I thought it was great that we had our own pool...And some people might say, 'Well, she should have told you about what was going on,' but...I appreciate the fact that I had that freedom from all the weight of the world and just enjoy myself."*

Even when her son dropped out of high school, Madeleine kept her faith in him. Instead of banishing him from the family for leaving behind education that was so important to her, she made the financial sacrifice of sending her son to the private high school that he had chosen. Madeleine's encouragement and faith did not go unrewarded; her son successfully graduated from his new school and eventually earned a college degree.

Madeleine also strove for excellence professionally. After several years of working as a high school teacher in East Boston, she was frustrated by the lack of diversity in the area. She saw the changing demographics of nearby Roxbury as an opportunity to really make a difference. Many low-income African American families had been moving to the area, and Madeleine felt she would have a lot to offer the students. In 1961, she happily accepted a permanent teaching job at Oliver Wendell Holmes Junior High school in Roxbury, Massachusetts.

While she was teaching at Wendell Holmes, Madeleine decided to pursue a Master's degree in Guidance. She was still passionate about teaching, but also wanted to help the children attain their goals more directly. "*[My sister] loved helping [the students] with their problems and helping them find solutions and getting them into college,*" explains Ione Vargus. She was so passionate about helping children that despite all her other accomplishments, her sister believes that "*that was what she would have deemed her [greatest] achievement - working with the kids in the school.*" Madeleine earned an M.A. degree in Guidance from Boston State College in 1966, returning to Wendell Homes, not as a teacher, but as a Guidance Counselor specializing in curriculum design.

This humble yet successful woman sat on the Medford School Committee for three full terms before resigning during her fourth due to illness. While on the Committee, she focused her efforts on improving those aspects of education in which she felt there were gaps. Specifically, Madeleine worked towards the implementation of a program to recruit high-quality teachers (especially teachers of color); the creation of a racial balance plan for the Medford schools, to ensure that all students (regardless of race

and ethnicity) could learn from one another; the strengthening of the existing guidance program; and the creation of a skills-training program to assist students who did not have an interest in pursuing higher education.

Both on the school board and in other parts of her life, her frank manner made others listen to her. *“She was always a very straightforward person...And a lot of times you wouldn’t like what Madeleine had to say about a given situation,”* explains Cortland. Madeleine was a strong woman who was not afraid to share her opinions with others; it was this conviction and effort that enabled her to go as far as she went. Cortland, who to this day considers his sister to be his best friend, continues, *“she wasn’t trying to win a personality contest. She would just tell it like it is and a lot of people got rubbed the wrong way by this... They didn’t like this, and they didn’t appreciate this until after she was gone.”*

But despite what some would consider a “no-nonsense personality”, Madeleine is fondly remembered for her successful work on the school board, as well as throughout the community. Madeleine was named Zeta Woman of the Year in 1973. As a part of this honor, a “This is your Life” booklet was made in dedication to her life, recounting all the landmarks and accomplishments of Madeleine’s life up until that point.

In a speech made at the presentation ceremony of this award, Pastor Oscar G. Phillips – the longtime minister of Madeleine’s church, the Shiloh Baptist – openly expressed his admiration of his congregant. “Wherever she served,” he stated, “she was always a catalyst striving to be effective... [she was] an inspiration to all of us because, like the rest of us, [she had] day-to day problems which [she did] not have hidden, nor use as an excuse. Instead [she] handled them with faith, demonstrating Christian convictions.”

## Community and Spirituality

*It's my belief that God gives us all gifts, special abilities that we have the privilege of developing to help us serve Him and humanity."*

- Benjamin Carson

The School Board was not Madeleine's only involvement in the community. She also served as a member of the Medford Fair Housing Committee, Friends of the Medford Public Library, the Parent Teachers' Associations, and the Neighborhood Corps Program. She was a very religious and spiritual woman. Madeleine, a woman who loved gospel music, was deeply involved in the Shiloh Baptist Church, which for most of the twentieth century, was a pillar of the West Medford community. When asked which aspect of the church Madeleine was involved in, her brother Courtland replied, unfazed: *"She had just about every role within the church save pastor... she was superintendent of Sunday school, a Sunday school teacher, on the Board of Trustees..."*.

Yet Madeleine did not preach her faith to others. *"She had lots and lots of faith, in God and everything. But it was her own faith, not something she pressed on other people,"* explained Dr. Vargus. Cortland agrees with this statement, describing how their sister's well-worn Bible was an integral - but not the only - part of Madeleine's spirituality. *"She knew her Bible, not only from reading but from what she did,"* he explains. *"She was truly an example of religious thinking and a feeling of goodness... Matt was just a good human being, she listened to her God every day. She would pray every day and would ask for deliverance in doing in doing things she had to do."*

## The Legacy

*"More than ever before, our young people need the influence of positive role models, individuals who can inspire in them a respect for the past and a longing for a better future."*

- L. Douglas Wilder

Spirituality guided Madeleine throughout her life, especially during difficult times. Like her father and sister before her, Madeleine fell ill with an inherited kidney disease. She was forced to stop teaching, to retire from the School Board, and to begin dialysis treatments. Fortunately she was able to set up dialysis equipment in her home so that she would not have to deal with going to the hospital for the treatments three times a week. Her family supported Madeleine during this hard time, assisting with her treatments, and reading to her during the long periods when all she could do was lie in bed. Unfortunately, Madeleine's health continued to decline. She was eventually brought to the New England Baptist Hospital, where she passed away in 1986.

Madeleine's legacy continues on past her death. In 2001, her name was adopted as that of one of Medford's two new middle schools. She was nominated by Mayor Michael McGlynn: *"I was proud to submit the name Madeleine Dugger Andrews because she was a role model for all students. She offered what students should see: leadership, courage, intellect. She did [great things for the community] and we got a lot of support for it,"* McGlynn states.

Honoring Madeleine was not a hard decision for him, *"[they asked me,] whose name would you like to have on the school? Who contributed to the quality of life,*

*stepped forward as a leader, was a public servant? She just came to mind immediately and it moved swiftly through the process".* Madeleine's brother, Cortland heartily agrees with the Mayor's decision, "*Matt stands head and shoulders above just about everybody else I've ever met, to tell you the truth*" he asserts with confidence.

Mayor McGlynn also explains how appropriate it was to name one of the new schools after Madeleine, given that it was her dream as a mother and member of the School Committee of Medford to build new schools in the town. "*She talked about giving students all the tools and amenities they needed in order to be successful in their educational experience...about the need of updated infrastructure, new schools,*" recalls McGlynn. "*[When Madeleine was alive], with the exception of one, we still had schools that were built in 1897, 1898. They were old back then and she had the foresight to say we needed new [ones].*" The new schools Madeleine had fought for were not built until the year 2000 – almost a decade and a half after her death. When they were opened, the average age of the existing Medford school buildings was 80 years.

Mayor McGlynn worked with two of Madeleine's sons on building the school. It was a project that many community members doubted would be successful. The mayor, who himself is intensely proud of having been involved in the building of the Andrews School, sees it as a fitting representation of Madeleine's legacy and what she stood for. "*Everyone thought we were crazy*" he says, remembering the process of building the school atop a landfill, and of working with her sons. "*But when it happened, most of the people who were critical, they thought it was great... that's what [Madeleine's son] Mabe fought for, because that's what his mother instilled in him and fought for in the 60s. There is a real continuity of history right there...*"

And so, even though Madeleine Dugger Andrews is gone, her legacy is strong. She lives on, not just in the name of a school but in the continued hard work and effort of her family and community members who were so inspired by her. *“She taught me a lot about how she handled [certain] situations ... anyone of lesser character and lesser strength would have done things different. [There were time when] I would take a knife to a knife or a tooth for a tooth attitude, and she would say to turn the other cheek”* her brother Cortland states, continuing, *“So as I say, she was quite a lady, and the world will be quite enriched as they learn more about her and how she did life and tried to help others lead their lives.”*