St Page AP THE CRARL OTTE FOST Thursday, September 28, 1984 Dr. Maxwell Is An Inspiration To Young Black Women

By Loretta Manago **Post Staff Writer** Strong, black women like Dr. Bertha Maxwell's godmother, Carrie Hunter, her grandmother, Rosa Lions, and her first female mentor, Janie Hemphill, were perhaps the sources for much of whom Dr. Maxwell is today.

No doubt, as a youth, she saw kin each of those women a positive attitude and an iron clad deterand an iron clad deter-mination that she too would possess. And certainly today Dr. Maxwell is an inspiration to young black women who see in her those same outstanding quali-ties that she once saw in her own role models.

"My grandmother impacted my life tremendously.I looked up to her because she was strong and because she was an organizer," reminisced Dr. Maxwell. Like the UNCC professor, Carrie Hunter was also an educator.

The role of an educator for Dr. Maxwell was not one that she chose for herself; rather, it was one that was chosen for her. It had been Dr. Maxwell's intention to pursue a career in nursing when she was a student at Johnson C. Smith University in 1950.

"I had really wanted to become a nurse, but I started changing my mind after talking with people about the opportunities in education. And financially, it was going to be easier to complete a major in Education in contrast to nursing

That education career began with the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Sys-tem. During the 16 years with CMS, Dr. Maxwell worked as an elementary teacher at Alexander Street School, as a Corrective reading instructor, as an assistant principal at Villa Heights Elemen-tary School in '68 and as principal of Morgan Ele-mentary School in '69.

The next year two important changes happened. Desegregation was intro-duced into the school system and Dr. Maxwell decided to quit the public school system. Her deci-sion to leave was largely due to her personal feel-ings about the desegregation process.

"I was not opposed to desegregation, but I was against the methods that chosen. I felt that constructive ways d have been found to hieve the process with-t using little black chilss withdren to cure a 300 year old social ill. Our black chil-dren had to be bussed way across town, whereas the white children still attended neighboring schools. There was no equity in it. I



....Director of A.A.A. Studies

felt it was morally wrong and unfair. Feeling as I did there was no way for me to continue to work in the system.

Working in a post secondary environment revived a sense of challenge that Dr. Maxwell has always thrived on. For the first seven years that she was at UNCC, she and other administrators, students, teachers and communicators were completely im-mersed in developing an Afro-American and African Studies curriculum.

"When we had completed putting the program to-gether, it was at a time when the African studies at other universities was collapsing. Our program was so strong and unique, that despite what was happening at other colleges, we proved that ours had a legitimate gitimate academic discipline and it was approved," asserted Dr. Maxwell.

This one project was accomplished in addition to

her other responsibilities. As an instructor in the College of Human Development and Learning, Dr. Maxwell supervised student teachers as well as taught intermediate level courses of study. She had, before that time, already earned her Master's of **Education And Admini**stration degree from UNC-Greensboro.

In 1976, another professional change was to trans-pire in the life of Dr. Maxwell. For one year she was the first woman vice president at her alma mater, Johnson C. Smith University. Although she did not remain in the position long, she said that she learned one valuable lesson and that was that "you can't go home."

"My perception of me is that I am a professional activist. Being that I know I have to be about active change. I have to make waves and I can never be



satisfied with the status quo. But I never deal with negativism. At Smith, I knew that I could not be that professional activist. When I decided to return to UNCC the following year I UNCC the following year I was doing what was best for my alma mater and myself." Her return to UNCC presented another obvious and the set challenge - to get depart-mental status for the Afro-American and African

Studies program that she had helped to create. As a "professional acti-vist" the roles and con-cerns that Dr. Maxwell has are many. She is particu-larly concerned with the black race and pointed out there are three things that we (blacks) must be aware

of: "We need to be fully cognizant of our identity and proud of our African descent. We should be able to make connections with others and ourselves. And lastly, we should learn to control our environment,

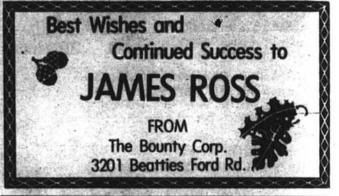
the family and the church as well as our personal environment.

She does not give this advice as a person who does not practice what she preaches, but every day she lives the creed in which she believes. In tangible ways it has shown itself in her role as an educator, as a black woman and cer-tainly as a "professional activist."

From her involvement with others like herself, has been the creation of Afro-American Cultural Center,

an outgrowth of the Afro-American African Studies at UNCC, the National Council of Black Studies of which Dr. Maxwell is the founder and Big Brothers and Big Sisters which stemmed from the WBT Advisory Board on which she serves.

But none of these accomplishments for her would qualify her being an achiever or a success. In her opinion if she is a success it's only because she has simply "diminished failure."





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