

Area teacher first tenured black at OU

By SUSAN IHNE
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Dr. Francine Child's goal of "being first" drove her to become the first black to become a tenured full-professor at Ohio University this summer.

"I grew up under my grandfather's saying that 'Can't is dead and ignorance is behind the door,'" the 37-year-old Wellington native said.

"I've always wanted to be first in everything. I would actually cry if someone would beat me pulling cotton," Dr. Child said of her younger years on a cotton farm.

She has achieved her No. 1 goal many times since she left her farm home where she was raised by her grandmother, the late Mrs. Clara Frazier.

Dr. Child received her bachelor's degree in biology in 1962 from Paul Quinn College in Waco. She was the first graduate of Booker T. Washington High School in Wellington to graduate from college.

She went back to Wellington after graduating to teach for three years. During the summers, she worked on her master's degree in biology at Texas Southern University in Houston and Prairie View A & M College in Prairie View.

Migraine headaches caused by her thesis project involving rats forced her to give up biology and start from scratch on a master's degree in counseling which she received from East Texas State University (ETSU) in Commerce in 1970.

During that time she was one of the first residential advisors at the McKinney Job Corps Center in McKinney. The dormitory she advised was "Dorm of the Month" for nine months in a row until the administration decided it wasn't fair not to pass around the award.

While at McKinney, she was offered a job as dean of students at Wiley College in Marshall. A year later, she took a part-time job as director of special services at ETSU while working on her doctorate degree.

In 1975, she received her doctorate in supervision, curriculum and instruction. She had begun teaching Afro-American Studies at Ohio University in Athens in September, 1974.

Of the 18 black professors, Dr. Child has been there the shortest time but was the first to become a tenured full-professor. She is president of the Black Faculty Administrative Caucus.

At Ohio University, Dr. Child has taken the only black church in the community and changed it from a 15-member congregation to one which has a 37-member traveling choir.

She restarted the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Athens. It now has 97 members and she hopes to raise the number to 200 this year.

"I guess I'm looked upon as a person who gets things done," she said of her various activities. "I'm never content when I'm short of getting the best."

A former tennis, basketball and track coach, Dr. Child jogs every morning. Lately she said her

reading material consisted of the Bible and books by Oral Roberts.

Her lifelong goal, besides being first, is to see and help racism be eliminated.

"I really believe someday people will stop asking 'What neighborhood do you come from,' 'Who was your father or mother,' 'How much money do you make' and 'What school are you from,'" she said.

To achieve her goal, she is studying for the entrance exam to medical school so she can become a psychologist or an urban and family doctor.

If she doesn't go to medical school, she would like to enter the mortuary business. As a funeral director, she would give pre- and post-death counseling and own a floral shop.

Eventually, she hopes to settle in the Dallas area.

"I'm a hope-to-die Texan," she said. She visits her mother, Mrs. Margaret Thomas of 1209 N. Tyler, whenever she gets the chance to come back to Texas.