

FOUR HUNTER GRADUATES

"Today there is discussion on the question of free tuition and whether public colleges should remain free. Much that we have been able to accomplish would have been impossible if it had been necessary for us to pay tuition to attend Hunter."

"We were all born and raised in the Morrisania section of the Bronx, which has for years been an underprivileged, high delinquency area. Our father was a postal employee while we were growing up. There are five of us and less than eight years' difference in age between the oldest and youngest, which meant that during most of our college years there were at least two of us attending college at the same time. It would have been impossible for our father to send us to colleges where tuition fees are required. This was one of the primary factors in our going to Hunter, which when we attended had free books, too.

"The extras in our lives very often were the result of special efforts made by our mother to provide them for us. She was a dressmaker and sewed for neighbors and friends to earn enough money to give us piano lessons (at fifty cents a lesson) or to treat us to a Broadway show or concert or to give us money for carfare to museums or other places of interest in the City.

"There were many who criticized and told our parents that the goals they had set for us were too high and that their expectations were unrealistic in view of the environment in which we lived, but our parents held to their dreams and gave us the support and encouragement needed to overcome the odds against us.

"In our area in the Bronx the Morrisania Youth Council was sponsored by the Community Council. The Youth Council was started in an attempt to deal with the rising rate of delinquency in the neighborhood. When we were in high school, we met Miss Blanche Wells, the Director, and she started us on our youthful careers in public service. Through this Council we worked on national fund-raising drives, in settlement houses, on programs designed to raise money in the community, and we participated in the programs of such organizations as the National Conference of Christians and Jews. This was in addition to serving on the Council's Executive Board and helping to plan the programs of the teen-age canteen. We also represented the Youth Council at meetings of the parent organization, of which our mother was an active member.

"People often ask which of us is the favorite child of our parents. In all honesty the four of us can answer 'not one of us,' for you see, there are five of us. The youngest member of our family is a brother and not only the apple of our parents' eyes, but a family favorite. Alvin Barksdale was graduated from Taft High School; attended City College; married in his junior year and dropped out of school to go to work full time. He is a New York City fireman and has two children, Alvin, Jr., four years old and Alicia, two years old."

The sisters now write of each other.

MARIE BARKSDALE '51

When Marie isn't on a speaking engagement in Texas or Chicago, or involved in planning a conference in New York, she is to be found at the Delta Headquarters in Washington, D.C. Marie is the Executive Director of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. Her three sisters are active members of the sorority.

Delta Sigma Theta, founded at Howard University in 1913, is an interracial public service sorority of some 35,000 college-educated women from 275 communities throughout the United States and in Haiti and Africa. It is Marie's job as Executive Director to administer the sorority program and coordinate the national headquarters operation. She coordinates national conventions and regional conferences throughout the country. She also represents Delta Sigma Theta at government and private organizational meetings in Washington.

This year the sorority is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. The inaugural observance on January 13, 1963, was attended by President Kennedy.

Long before Marie was asked to assume the responsibilities of Executive Director for Delta Sigma Theta, she had shown her leadership ability in civic and church organizations while still at high school and later at Hunter. She was a youth worker at Trinity Methodist Church; she served at the youth center of the Morrisania Community Council; she was chosen as a representative to attend a field conference of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. Marie worked indefatigably in the Bronx Chapter of the NAACP. She served ably as president of the New York Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

TELL THEIR STORY



*President Kennedy, Dr. Elizabeth W. Reeves, and Marie Barksdale, '51
at the Delta Sigma Theta Luncheon, January 13, 1963*

After graduation from Hunter, where she was a Pre-Social Major, Marie worked briefly at the Methodist Book Concern. Following this, she was a social investigator with the Department of Welfare. Soon she was transferred to the Domestic Relations Court, where she represented the Department of Welfare in court cases. She left this job to go to Washington to serve in her present capacity.

PEARL BARKSDALE WHEELER '53

Pearl is married to Robert Lee Wheeler, Jr., a public health educator, currently with the New York City Department of Health. They have two children, Robert III who is six and one-half and Adrienne Lea, one and one-half.

Although her activities are varied, they all stem from Pearl's three basic interests: reading, music, and religion. At Hunter she majored in Music and minored in Education. After earning her B.A. in 1953 she returned under the fifth-year program and obtained her M.A. in Education.

Pearl has been teaching in the New York City public school system since graduating. She has been in charge of music at P.S. 161 Brooklyn and has instructed teachers in how to teach music. She is currently teaching a special class for emotionally disturbed children. Her future plans are to return to Hunter for her Ph.D. with emphasis in guidance.

Religion has always had a role of importance in Pearl's life and much of her time and energy has been devoted to her church activities. Prior to marriage she was an active member of the Youth Fellowship, director of the young people's choir, church pianist and the alternate organist. Today in her church she is president of a nursery group, chairman of annual fund-raising events, and church pianist. She is also a Sunday School teacher and has worked in the Vacation Bible School Program.

ODELLA BARKSDALE WILLIAMSON '55

Odella is married to Clarence Williamson who is a New York City fireman. They have one child, a daughter, Rachel Lynn, who is three years old.

Odella majored in Political Science and minored in Sociology at Hunter College. She worked as an aide in the Education office. Outside of school, she was just as busily engaged in civic activities.

After Odella graduated from Hunter in 1955, she worked with the American Red Cross, counseling servicemen and their families and aiding veterans to file claims and receive needed care. She participated in Red Cross "Blood Bank" drives and also worked on their annual Christmas programs.

She has served as vice-president of the Bronx branch of the NAACP. She has also worked in many political campaigns. She was a Delta volunteer for public

service and tutored teen-agers at the YWCA. This program was geared to prevent students from dropping out of school.

Odella has been working on a committee which helps Negro children who are victims of sickle-cell anemia. She has been a youth parole worker at the New York State Training School for Girls.

Odella is the recipient of a New York State Youth Parole Apprenticeship award as a result of a competitive examination. She is now attending Adelphi University's Graduate School of Social Work, specializing in group work, on a full fellowship, which includes free tuition and maintenance.

Odella enjoys visiting art galleries. She likes to

From the Philippines Edith writes:

"The Peace Corps project in the Philippines is the largest the U.S. sponsors, with over 400 volunteers. In June, 1963, there were 9 groups and 628 volunteers scattered throughout the Philippine Islands. The Philippine Government has asked the Peace Corps to assist in the instruction of English, science and mathematics in its public school system. Most volunteers work in the *barrio* (village) elementary schools, while a few teach in the normal and high schools. There are also a few community development workers. The volunteers in Group III (my group) were assigned initially to Leyte and Samar, two of the least developed islands of the Archipelago.



Pearl Barksdale Wheeler



Odella Barksdale Williamson



Edith Barksdale

sketch and looks forward to trying her hand at oil painting. Not only does Odella make her own clothes, she often designs them as well.

EDITH BARKSDALE '56

Edith was an International Affairs major at Hunter and received her B.A. in 1956.

She has a flair for foreign languages; she speaks and understands French, Spanish, Russian, some German, some Italian, some Urdu, and several of the Lebanese and Filipino dialects!

After graduation Edith worked at the Foreign Policy Association of America, the Pakistani Consulate and for Student Travel Abroad. She has traveled in England, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Greece, Egypt and Lebanon.

Edith is currently in the Philippines completing her second year as a Peace Corps volunteer.

When she returns to this country, Edith plans to work for an M.A. in Foreign Affairs, with emphasis on the Near and Middle East.

"We arrived in the Philippines in March, 1962, after three months of training including four weeks at the Peace Corps camp in Puerto Rico. My assignment is in Baybay, Leyte. Baybay is situated on the South China Sea (called the Camote Sea here) on the central western coast of Leyte.

"Most of us are classified as teachers' aides in the Philippine Corps. As there are more teachers here than jobs, volunteers are not to supplant the teachers. Many of us, however, do teach science and English classes. Presently, I am working with two experimental grades (I and II) at the central school in Baybay. The medium of instruction is English rather than the local dialect. English is usually taught as a second language.

"Most Peace Corps volunteers declare that they have gained considerably. Many feel that they have grown as persons, understand themselves better and appreciate America and their heritage more, in addition to the usual gains derived from the experience of living in an alien culture. Most of us never realized how much we could do or take until now."