

And then, there's Maude!

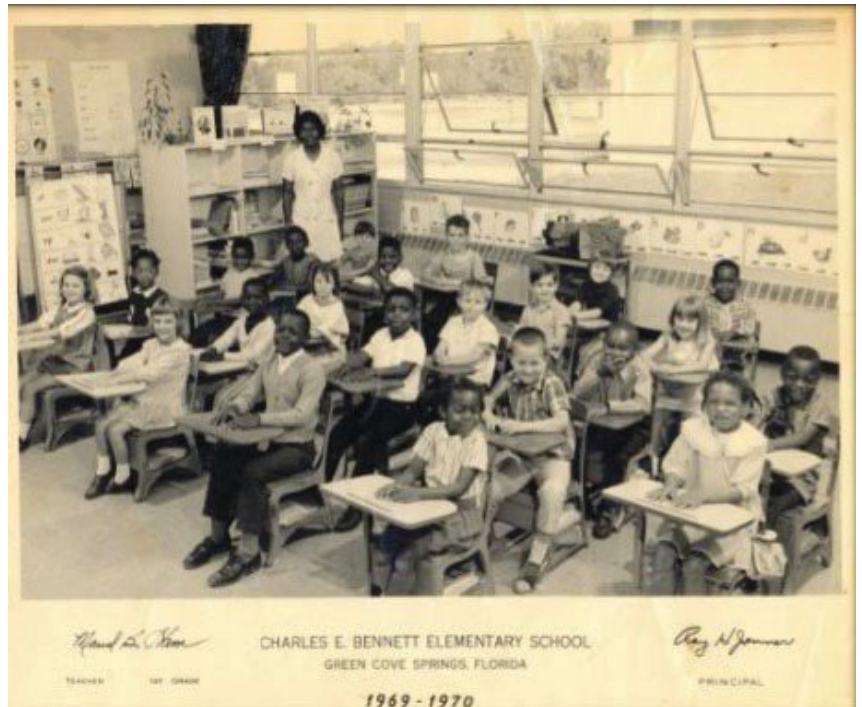
By Dr. Cheryl Seals Gonzalez

Maude Burroughs Jackson is a name that resonates deeply within the hearts and minds of many community members, visitors, and friends of Hill Top - Middleburg, Clay County, and Duval County, Florida. Known for her unwavering dedication and tireless efforts, Maude has become an integral part of the area's fabric, contributing significantly to its understanding of historical culture and development.

Early Life and Background. Maude was born in 1942 in Middleburg, a charming town with a rich history and a close-knit community. It took two villages, Whitesville and Garey's Ferry to grow together as one, in 1894 to become Middleburg. Today, drivers note navigation instructions to Middleburg from busy toll roads and interstate highways, which will result in more growth. Her upbringing with strong family ties comprising eight siblings instilled in her a strong sense of community, unity, and a desire to give back. It is no secret how much she cares and cherishes the old schoolhouse building that she attended during her formative years before advancing to Old Stanton High School in Jacksonville. She subsequently received a degree in education from Florida Memorial College (now a university), which was located in St. Augustine (now Miami Gardens, FL). From there, she enjoyed a teaching career that began in Clay Schools in 1968 and later in Dade County until she returned during the 1990s.

Community Involvement.

Although her work is mostly about the preservation of her old school building, which was moved to Hill Top's Hunter-Douglas Park in Middleburg, Maude still speaks about her past Civil Rights activism as a college student. Participating was an act of bravery because doing so was not required. She used her clerical skills while working at the Civil Rights headquarters, went to jail in Tallahassee and St. Augustine, and managed to meet people that most can only read about. Firsthand, she worked with Dr. Robert Hayling, a St. Augustine dentist; the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Josiah Williams, Congressman John Lewis, and many more renowned icons who have passed away. She was a student at Florida Memorial College and in the 1960s, times were tumultuous.



Listening to her on videos and reading much about her, as she shares her experiences, she inevitably provides new insight about her "Why?" Whether presenting in halls of government, schools, or simply communicating with passersby, during this stage of her life, her concerns are evident in her extensive involvement in local initiatives. She plays a pivotal role in community events that bring residents together and foster a sense of unity.

Legacy and Impact. Despite her busy schedule, Maude tries to maintain a balance between her community work and personal life. Her ability to understand how things are, but still move forward with her platform, is what likely keeps her going. The now elder woman who witnessed inhumane actions against humans who sought to experience the highest quality of life one could enjoy has not skipped a beat. She learned from civil rights icons that "bringing people together" was an important enough

reason to temporarily suffer inconvenience, or more. According to CLAY TODAY and Neighbor to Neighbor newspaper articles, even her family once conceded that “Maude’s just going to do what Maude’s going to do.”

Maude Burrough Jackson's legacy in Middleburg is one of service, compassion, and incredible resiliency, according to National Parks interviewer Ranger Ted Johnson. The woman who views the meaning of the Civil Rights Movement as an idea to let people do what they want to do if they can or need to do it speaks perhaps keeps her active today, because she feels like it.



Left - Maude Burroughs Jackson, a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated – Omega Zeta Zeta Chapter (Duval County), celebrated an additional milestone on March 22, 2025 in Jacksonville. She was the 2025 Blue Rose Legacy of Excellence Award Honoree. Right - Sandy D. Simpson-Smith, from the sorority’s Delta Alpha Delta Chapter (Clay County), happily greeted and acknowledged Maude for her insight and contributions to the understanding of Civil Rights history.

Her contributions have left an indelible mark on the town, inspiring others to follow her. As Middleburg continues to grow and evolve, Maude's influence will undoubtedly remain a guiding force, shaping the future community for years to come.■