

The Parker Family Part 4 – “Give what you can to help those in need”

The fourth child of Charles and Laura Steele, as mentioned previously, is Eugene. According to his daughter, Dianne, Eugene played baseball for the North Buxton All Stars as a catcher and pitcher. There are rumours that he was scouted, but no documentation backs up this information. Eugene also loved to garden and golf, but also had a unique hobby of making hats and ties with pheasant feathers. In *The Long Road* by Charlotte Bronte Perry, it reprints a May 2, 1964 article from the *Windsor Star* which talks about Eugene’s hobby. The article, titled “Fine Feathers of Fine Birds Make Fine Hats,” says “Mrs. Steele has one of the largest assortments of hats in the neighborhood, and Mr. Steele the ‘sharpest’ ties. He explained that the whole thing started in November 1963, when his cousin asked him for some pheasant feathers ... so that she could try to make a hat ... ‘When my wife, Freida, heard that I was getting the feathers so that someone else could make a hat, she suggested ... that I could make her one.’ Mr. Steele said a great deal of equipment and money are not required, but a lot of time and patience is.”

Eugene was also very active in the community, volunteering for several causes including the Jerry Lewis Muscular Dystrophy Telethon, acting as president of the PTA at his children’s school, Dr. H.D. Taylor Public School in Windsor, tutoring kids in chemistry and physics, and also serving as a member of The Guardian Club, which brought attention to discrimination in Windsor and surrounding areas. Freida Parker Steele was also involved, in addition to Dr. Dan Hill, Allen Bourovoy, Dr. Howard McCurdy (Guardian Club’s first president), Dr. Wilson Head and J. Lyle Browning. This organization performed a series of test cases, particularly with discriminatory housing practices. For example, the group would send a Black Canadian couple to view a house or apartment, in addition to another couple, but they would be white. What they found was that the white couple would be offered the rental, while the former couple would be

told that the property was no longer available. These test cases drew a lot of attention to discriminatory practices in the area.

Freida and Eugene had six children: Janice Gayle Steele, Alan Parker Steele, Dianne Lauralyn Steele-Ber, Cherie Lynn Steele-Sexton, Gina Mae Hughes and Deborah Anne Marshall. Janice worked as an artist (particularly with stained glass), but also as an art consultant and for an advertising company. Alan Parker Steele worked as a graphic artist, working in Toronto for several years, and did work for companies such as Five Alive and Ford. Dianne worked as a nurse, but later followed in her grandfather's footsteps, becoming an officer with the Peel Regional Police. Did you know it was Alton who presented Dianne with her badge during the graduation ceremony? Cherie became a guidance councillor and special education teacher, while Gina followed in her father's footsteps by joining the fire department in Detroit. Deborah went to St. Clair College to become a paralegal but did not go into that profession. She also attended Marvel Beauty School and St. Clair College for aesthetics. Deborah did so well that she was asked to teach courses, which she did before moving to Toronto where she also taught a few days a week.

Giving back to the community is an important lesson in the Parker family. Alton Parker learned from his mother Ida to "Give what you can to help those in need. Share what you've got," which explains why Alton and his wife Evelyn devoted so much time and energy to Uncle Al's Kids' Party. Alton also took his children and grandchildren to Goodfellows where they would fill and deliver food baskets, which is something that Alton's parents did with him. This was so that they could see the giving firsthand and this was a lesson that Alton passed on to his daughter Freida. For example, Freida was one of the first volunteers for Windsor's Hospice, in addition to being a Board Director for the museum and on the Board of Maryvale.

Freida's children have carried on this tradition as well. Dianne also volunteered at Hospice and Maryvale, in addition to the Red Cross, while Gina facilitates domestic violence sessions at her church and Cherie is involved with the international organization, Days For Girls-Windsor. With this organization, volunteers sew personal hygiene products for girls/young ladies in developing countries, but also disadvantaged females in the area. They also fundraise in order to buy materials.

The next generation of Freida and Eugene's grandchildren include Steele Parker Hughes, Taylor Joie Marshall, William Niles Sexton III and Jefferson Travis Marshall.

What we publish is not a complete history of any family and is based on the documents that are available. We welcome photos and information to fill in the gaps. See you next week where we will celebrate another amazing family.