



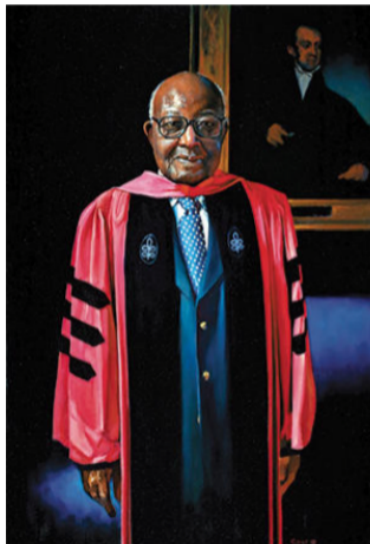
The Saracen Klub Journal

Documenting the History of the Beta Epsilon Chapter of Kappa Alpha Ps Fraternity, Inc.

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Brother Dr. Preston Noah Williams (BE: 1946)



- Birthdate:** May 23, 1926
- Born/Raised:** Born in Alcolu, South Carolina; While his parents were living in Homestead, PA, his mother travelled back to South Carolina where Preston would be born. He would grow up in Homestead, PA and the family would later move to Pittsburgh, PA.
- Parents:** Father Anderson Williams, Sr. and mother Bertha Bell McCray Williams, both born in South Carolina. Parents migrated to Homestead in 1921 after one of the steel mills recruited black workers during a steel strike. His father, who wanted to pay off a mortgage on 300 acres of land he owned in SC, would use his work wages from the steel mill to achieve his goal. 80 of the 300 acres remain in the family today.
- Family Values:** Presbyterian Faith, Family
- Early Education:** Brother Williams' mother was a Sunday school teacher for nearly 25 years at Grace Memorial Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh. His father was an elder there and came from a long line of Presbyterians that stretched back to the establishment of the Westminster Church in South Carolina just after the Civil War. "I grew up in the church," he said. "I decided at about eight years of age that I was going to go into the ministry, and there was only one change in that; instead of becoming a pastor, I became a Divinity professor." Brother Williams grew up with racism in Homestead, where he was only one of a handful of black children in his school. "I lived in an integrated neighborhood and went to integrated schools, but my whole life I was surrounded by racism."
- High School:** Homestead High School – Class of 1944.
- College/Major:** AB & MA, Washington and Jefferson College (Phi Beta Kappa)
BD, Johnson C. Smith University (Theological Seminary)
STM, Yale University Divinity School
PhD, Harvard University

Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity

At the time of this writing, Brother Williams is believed to be the oldest living member initiated into the Beta Epsilon Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi, Fraternity, Inc. His older brother Anderson was a member of Kappa Alpha Psi, initiated at Johnson C. Smith University (Alpha Epsilon 1942). While Anderson (Preston's brother) was a graduate student at University of Pittsburgh studying Zoology, he worked with the BE Chapter to help established the 1946 pledge class. Brother Preston Williams recollection of being part of the 1946 pledge class was being introduced to Kappa Alpha Psi through Anderson and his brother's friends. He also remembers road tripping back to Pittsburgh from W&J regularly for pledge activities (doing whatever was needed to be done) and his going over ceremony ("crossing the burning sands") at Pitt. Once he became a Kappa brother he remembers meeting and becoming acquainted with Lorenzo Hill (BE Charter Member) and William Goode (a Hill District/Homewood Pharmacist), who were both part of Pittsburgh Alumni Chapter.

As he journeyed through his teaching career from Johnson C Smith, Knoxville College, NC Central and Lincoln (PA), he had an advisory relationship with the Kappa chapters at those universities. During his time, in Boston, he had a peripheral relationship with Boston Alumni, primarily through his friendship with Brother Ed Chase, who was close to his age. Brother Chase would keep him up to date on the goings on of the Boston Alumni Chapter. Other Boston area Kappa's like John Wilson (former Morehouse College President), J. Ernest Wilkens, Jr's son is on the Harvard Law faculty, and Craig S. Wilder, a MIT professor were all links to Kappa who he would occasionally cross paths with. However, his main links to Kappa throughout his life had always been through his brother Anderson and friend Ed Chase, both of whom passed away in recent years.

Adult Life & Career

In 1962, Brother Williams and his wife Constance moved to Boston, MA where he would continue his graduate studies at Harvard and later become a professor at Boston University. At Harvard, in the late 1960's, protest and turmoil would persist following the death of Martin Luther King, leading to demands from Harvard's black students for black faculty and an Afro American Studies Department. The Harvard committee report, published in early 1969, included recommendations to establish the African American Studies Department and hire black, tenured professors. Dr. Williams was brought into Harvard Divinity School from Boston University in 1971 as one of the first black professors at Harvard and he would assist the black students and the administration to bridge gaps between the two groups and further develop the committee goals.

As a result of his close work with the Harvard administrators and students, he would also assist in the development of the W.E.B. Dubois Institute, becoming the programs founding director. Started in 1975, the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research, annually appoints scholars who conduct individual research for a period of one to two semesters in a wide variety of fields related to African and African American Studies. With a record of supporting more than 300 Fellows since its founding, the Institute has arguably done more in its short existence to ensure the scholarly development of African and African American Studies than any other pre-doctoral or post-doctoral program in the United States. In 2000, Harvard University's Center for African & African American Research began awarding the W.E.B. Du Bois Medal, considered to be Harvard's highest honor in the field of African and African American studies. Brother Smith was awarded the Dubois medal as part of the first class of awardees in 2000.

Dr. Williams became the Houghton Research Professor of Theology and Contemporary Change at Harvard Divinity School in 1971. His scholarship has illuminated the history and impact of racism on the bodies, minds, and souls of black folk—and many others. His extracurricular activities have helped pave the way for the many students and scholars who came after him. In recognition of these contributions, the HDS Alumni/Alumnae Council has named Williams a 2016 Peter J. Gomes STB '68 Memorial Honoree. He was also honored with the unveiling of his portrait in 2011, which hangs in HDS as a tribute to his great work.

Family

Brother Williams is married to Constance, a native of Charleston WV. Constance is a graduate of Berea College (Carter G. Woodson's Undergraduate University) in Kentucky and has a PhD from Brandis. She has taught on the faculty at both Boston University and Brandis. They were married in 1956 and have two sons. One son works for PNC in structured finance and the other son works for Chubb Insurance Company. They have a 6-year old grandson - Preston Noah Williams.

Other Anecdotes

- Brother Williams closing comment was that he has always been proud of being a member of Kappa Alpha Psi.
- Brother Williams was also proud of his W&J Football experiences – especially being able to share the article below with his young grandson.
- Washington & Jefferson and Johnson C. Smith are both Presbyterian Colleges. Brother Williams would attend Washington & Jefferson to pursue his undergraduate studies with an interest in becoming Presbyterian pastor. Despite being accepted into the graduate University of Chicago Theology School following his W&J graduation, he chose Johnson C Smith to be closer to his South Carolina Family.
- One of Brother Williams many contributions to Harvard Divinity School was to get African religions included at the Center for the Study of World Religions. He recalled that the many in the center didn't recognize African religions because they were not considered to have a written scripture. He and John Carman, with the assistance of the Nigerian Professor Kenneth Dike (who in the early 1970s was chairman of the Committee on African Studies at Harvard), made several trips to Africa and brought African religious scholars to Harvard. He noted that his world view on religion was enlarged by his exposure to the African religious scholars.
- Preston Williams, who retired in June 2002, became the Houghton Professor at the Harvard Divinity School in 1971. He taught previously at four historically black colleges: Johnson C. Smith University, Knoxville College, North Carolina College for Negroes (now North Carolina Central University), and Lincoln University. He also served as associate chaplain at Pennsylvania State University and Protestant chaplain at Brandeis University.
- Prior to coming to Harvard Divinity School, he was the Martin Luther King, Jr. Professor at Boston University School of Theology. In his years at Harvard, he served in various capacities beyond his professorial role: He was Acting Dean of the Divinity School in 1974-75, and the acting and first director of Harvard's W. E. B. Du Bois Institute from 1975 to 1977. From 1998 to 2008 he was the director of the Summer Leadership Institute, a program that brings religious leaders from urban settings to Harvard for two weeks of intensive classes on community development. His fields of interest are Christian ethics, social and economic justice, human rights, and African American experience. He is an ordained Presbyterian USA minister.



5 The 1971 appointment of Preston N. Williams, Ph.D. '67, was a watershed in the intellectual life of HDS. His work brought attention to the idea that studying the appropriation of a religion by people with a shared historical experience could be as important as studying a religion's classical expressions, expanding hermeneutical discussions across the curriculum. Williams was Houghton Professor from 1971 to 2002 and was founding director of Harvard's W.E.B. Du Bois Research Institute. Photo courtesy of Andover-Harvard Theological Library



Harvard Divinity School unveiled and hung a portrait of Preston Williams on August 30, 2011.



Preston N. Williams
Homestead High School
Yearbook Picture – 1943

W&J WILL PLAY ARMY GRIDDEERS

Presidents Will Present First Football Aggrega- tion in 3 Years

WASHINGTON, Pa., Oct. 12 (U.P.) --Whether Washington & Jefferson College football teams will regain their prewar status will be answered tomorrow when the Presidents present their first team in three years against Fletcher General Army Hospital at Cambridge, Ohio.

Coaches Wilbur (Fats) Henry and Furman Ness, after final pregame drills yesterday, selected a probable starting lineup for the season's inaugural.

William Keeler, 180, Greensburg, and John Love, 175, Smock, will start at ends. Terry Koval, 195, Marianna, and Carl Gillespie, 170, Washington, Pa., have won tackle berths.

Winning over heavier competition, Don Moore, 165, Cadiz, Ohio, will be at center.

The backfield, deep in reserves, will operate from the "T" with 155-pound Carl Bucheit, Canonsburg, calling the signals. Bucheit formerly played with Trinity College.

Harry Frazek, of Pittsburgh, and Preston Williams, of Homestead, each weighing 170, won halfback posts with their speedy showing in practice sessions.

Rudy Vujnovich, 190, of Pittsburgh, has been named fullback but his position is threatened by 210-pound Pete Shulin, Washington, Pa.

Cleric Will Matriculate At Harvard

Rev. Preston N. Williams, formerly of Pittsburgh, according to announcement from the United Presbyterian Church, U. S. A., has been awarded a Presbyterian graduate fellowship for the academic year 1962-'63. He will pursue his studies for the doctoral degree at Harvard University.

Only 27 awards were made from among 99 applicants. Of the awards, 17 were renewals, and 10 were first awards. The graduate fellows, 26 men and one woman, are studying in this country and abroad.

Institutions of study include: Harvard University, Union Theological Seminary, in New York; Emory University, Atlanta, Ga.; University of Nebraska, University of Michigan, Princeton Theological Seminary and San Francisco Theological Seminary.

Those studying abroad are at Basel University in Switzerland, Oxford University, the University of Paris and the American Schools of Oriental Research in Jerusalem, Jordan.

The highly coveted awards are made to communicant members of the United Presbyterian Church who are working towards the doctorate in preparation for seminary and college teaching, campus ministry, staff work for the church's boards and agencies, and other specialized ministries.

Shamokin News-Dispatch
Shamokin, Northumberland, PA
Oct 12, 1945

Pittsburgh Courier
Pittsburgh, PA
June 23, 1962