Information of My Accomplishments

I grew up in the segregated South in Mobile Alabama. Two very powerful strong Black women in my life who help guide me in exploration of new directions to improve my life. My Grandmother had only a fourth grade education, but understood that my Mother and Uncle had to be educated. My Uncle attended trade school and Mother attended Tennessee A & I College. She was told by her Father that she could attend a different college each year and she did, after Tennessee A & I, the next year it was Tuskegee one year and next Alabama State.

My Mother earned a degree as a teacher who was well respected educator who won many accolades from others in her profession. You could find many students sitting in her class that had difficulty in learning. I recall that she would lead children in exercise and games. Additionally, end of school activities were plan that involved “May Pole activities.” With a mother who believed in learning, my sister and I had additional reading assignments and other learning activities. During the summer months, we could not just go out and play. We had homework assignments to complete before we could leave.

I had a pretty rough time as a child who grew up with asthma, especially with very little known treatment protocol. Doctors told my family that I would not be able to do very many things that involved physical activities. Well, no one in my family listened, and I was encouraged to participate in any activities. My sister and I were given a choice of where we wanted to attend college. I selected Tennessee A & I and my sister selected Tuskegee College.

One major activity was learning how to swim. To get lessons I had to walk three miles to the only Black swimming pool in the city where I learned to swim and eventually earned certification as a lifeguard. Many summer days were spent water skiing and swimming, and I played a variety of sports.

The ability to swim will become a very important factor in the success that I have achieved.

While I was a student at TSU, the American Red Cross sponsored a program called “Friendship to Africa,” that was open to college students. Over five hundred students applied and only ten were selected. During that time I was working on my master’s degree and was selected to represent entire Southeastern Region. Six students were assigned to Malawi, Africa and four to Liberia, Africa. I was assigned to Liberia which was the first free country in Africa, and was placed in charge of the other three students. We spent the entire summer teaching a variety of American Red Cross courses.

It was such a wonderful experience especially when I had the opportunity to visit the Mansion where the President lived. On one floor of this Mansion were pictures of free slaves allowed to return to Africa. It was such a wonderful cultural experience and I enjoyed every day working with so many groups.

Once we had achieved our objectives in Malawi and Liberia, I was given the opportunity along with three other students, to give a report to the League of Red Cross Society in Geneva, Switzerland. One student knew someone in France which was only a couple of blocks away, had a resort and we were permitted to stay at no cost. We will mountain climbing for two days which was very exciting.

Once I returned to campus, I completed my master’s degree in physical education. A recruiter from Saginaw, Michigan was on campus looking for an African American who could teach physical education and had a Water Safety instructors’ certification. Additionally, that individual would coach both Boys and Girls swim teams.

I had never swan competitive in my life but knew that I could handle responsive changing conditions.

I had faced many challenges in my life, and realize that behind each challenge is an opportunity. I was hired after a second interview in Saginaw Michigan. I was able to build a successful program that produced a diver who earned an opportunity to compete in the State Championship.

My second year of teaching I was named department chair and given other coaching duties. I became head coach for women basketball and eventually made it to the state championship. Many players that I coached were able to get scholarships to college with one who played for TSU. One of my players earned a full scholarship to play for Michigan State and became an “All American.

Additionally, I coached fast pitch softball and also played myself. I broke an ankle in two places sliding into third base during a game. Another coach suggests that I learn to play a sport that I could not kill myself in and I asked which sport. He recommended that I play golf and which became a critical addition in my career as a coach. When the Junior Varsity Baseball Coach who taught at a different school could not be present, I was assigned to coach this team. I never lost a game, called squeeze plays, steal, and so on, and never could get a handshake from an opposing Coach.

I also served as an assist coach of the Men’s Basketball team. We also reach the state championship and had to play the team that Magic Johnson was a member of. We lost but held Magic to only 12 points, but he had a number of assists.

I returned to TSU in 1980 to teach swimming in the physical education department. After two years, I was asked to coach the men’s swim team. We swam competitive against available programs such as Vanderbilt, University of the South, Florida A & M, Emory University, Georgia State, and Western Kentucky university; there were not many universities with swim teams in the South. Many swimmers graduated and are very successful in their chosen careers.

The university joined the Ohio Valley Conference and swimming was not a part of other sport programs. I was asked by the athletic director to start a men’s golf team as I played golf. With cautious optimism I said yes and was ready to face another challenge. I discovered much later that I was the only

Woman who were head coach of a Division I Men’s golf team. It took some time to realize a successful golf program. I had to be very creative in an attempt to beat the odds as many teams had private clubs to practice and play on plus they had good equipment. We had no available golf course except for a

nine holes Ted Rhodes course located near the university. Currently, It is an eighteen hole course today.

I learned that no one were really interested in this program, it was used to meet requirements established by the NCAA. I wanted to achieve success with this program, that is why I declined to take the easy way out and worked hard to locate highly talented and absolutely committed golfers. But, first I had to sell my program to Professional Golf Professional at local golf courses. This effort permitted the teach was able to have access to the Springhouse GC, Hermitage GC, and Legend GC which help with recruitment of talented golfer who would make genuine contributions to the TSU golf program. Some of those golfers were International students.

I received a call from the Golf Professional of the Governor’s Club who extended an invitation to my team to play and practice. He said that he remembered me when he played for Memphis State and was impressed with my accomplishments; it was an honor to receive this invitation as this is an outstanding course.

The program began to receive recognition with wins in a number of outstanding tournaments. Sam Puryear was head of the First Team program in Atlanta and was replaced by Nyre Williams who is presently the director. Sam joined Stanford University as an assistant coach and help them win an NCAA championship. After that win, he was named head golf coach at Michigan State University. After three years he left for a head coach position in North Carolina.

My first two International recruits were from Canada, Adrian Adams and Sean Foley. Adrian tried earlier on to play on tour but did not make it. He now has his own Farmer’s Insurance and Investment franchise in Nashville. Sean Foley is presently Tiger Woods swing coach.

I was able to continue recruiting other International recruits with one who is Robert Dinwiddie. He is presently on the European Tour. He was a member of the team that won the National Minority Golf Championship which shot the lowest score to win. Robert represented on the the NCAA Regional Championship held on the Yale University golf course and became the university’s first All-American Golfer. After graduation, Robert earned the rights to play in the US Open.

As with all of the teams that I have coached, I expected excellence and hard work. Each athlete was required to make the extra effort to achieve their goals and to graduate. The golf program was awarded the Academic Achievement award for the highest Grade Point Average of any golf program in the Ohio Valley Conference. Members of the golf program realized their full potential and are successful in their

chosen careers; there are lawyers, and many in business organizations.

I recently retired as Chair of Department of Human Performance and Sport Science. There are four concentrations in the undergraduate program; Physical Education Teacher Education, Exercise Science, Athletic Training, and Health Education Teacher Education. There are two concentrations at the graduate level; Sport Administration and Exercise Science. Both degree programs have grown the number of students matriculating through the department and increased graduation rates for the Tennessee State University.

There is one graduate from Atlanta that I am very proud of and his name is Jonathan Edwards who played football. I invited his mother Mrs. Vivian Napier as my guest. She was an inspiration to Jonathan and helped to make a significant contribution to his success. He now has earned a master degree in Teacher Education and is married with a little girl. I had the pleasure of observing him in action this past summer during one of the many summer camps on campus. He handled those children without any problems and helped them have a wonderful summer experience. It is a pleasure to congratulate you Mrs. Napier.

My accomplishments in golf has inspired a movie entitled “from the rough,” which stars Taraji P. Henson, Tom Felton, and Michael Clarke Duncan. This is an outstanding honor and I owe a debt of gratitude to my Mother and Grandmother who are my constant inspiration to achieve. It is Hollywood embedded, yet captures how I never gave up to proud accomplishments my goals that were achieved with hard work.

I have seen the movie four times and just returned had the opportunity to watch a screening with Sam Puryear at the PGA Merchandise Show in Orlando, Florida. Afterwards, he said that he had tears in his eyes. Pierre Bagley is the Director who has done an outstanding job with this movie. You will witness an array of emotions that range from anger, pain, joy, and happiness which is quite an impressive achievement by the director. It is an inspirational message that I hope will inspire everyone, especially women to make a difference in the lives of many individuals. I feel that they will understand the need to build collective confidence in themselves.

I will always remember the difference made in the lives of those that I have had the opportunity to coach and teach. I will treasure memories of every unique venture as long as I live and know that Tennessee State University helped me to achieve and reach my goals.

I would like to share a quote by one our finest graduates, Oprah Winfrey, who said “Martin Luther King, Jr. and everything that he represented, all the people whose names never made the history books, made it possible for me to stand and be who I am and take over ownership of my life.” I couldn’t have done better myself if not for the education that I received from Tennessee State University.