



**THIS EDITION IS DEDICATED  
TO PROF. C. T. COBB**



(1907-1988)

**THE ROAD TO LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL  
AFRO-AMERICAN EDUCATOR IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

Professor Cota Theophilus Cobb devoted over forty-one years of service to the development of Black education in the Mississippi Delta town of Forrest City, Arkansas. In spite of the fact that much of his program initiative was rooted in the era of the "Separate But Equal Doctrine" of Plessy vs. Ferguson of 1896, Professor Cobb--as Principal of our beloved Lincoln High School--demonstrated an extraordinary standard of excellence in the development of human resources through the difficult eras of social and political change. In the quest for quality education, students traveled "The Road to Lincoln High School" by diverse means: some of them walked, others rode the school bus, a few had access to family modes of transportation, and still others returned by the Greyhound Bus from the cities of the North to complete their education in a 'sleepy town' dominated by the rigid rules of segregation and the cultural ethos of the planter class. Within this framework, however, Professor Cobb kept hope alive, inspired us to learn and respect the work ethic, and developed the Lincoln High School infrastructure.

Mr. Cobb, however, followed criss-crossing routes on "The Road To Lincoln." Historically Black colleges served as our first high schools in numerous regions of the border and southern states. Hence, this explains why Mr. Cobb took the high school diploma from Rust College, Holly Springs, Mississippi, in 1926, and the Bachelor of Arts degree from Rust College in 1930. He received the Masters of Arts Degree from Fisk University in 1947, where he specialized in mathematics, biological sciences, and

school administration. While being nurtured in both the conflicting ideologies of Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois, Fisk University may well have served as the professional model for Lincoln rather than Hampton Institute (now University), and Tuskegee (now University). The fact that the Lincoln program may have been wedded to all these institutions must not be ruled out. Nevertheless, Mr. Cobb would appear to have entrusted himself into leadership roles from the beginning, for he served as Head Teacher at Madison Junior High from 1932-1944.

In 1944 Professor Cobb became the fourth Principal of Lincoln High School. In the same year he married Mrs. Esther G. Cobb (1911-1986). He became almost immediately the catalyst for the transformation of Black education. In that year and before, Lincoln was not even on the list of Arkansas State Board of accredited high schools. After having served for just one year as principal in 1945, Mr. Cobb was responsible for obtaining a first class rating and accreditation for Lincoln High School with the Arkansas State Board of Education. The first class to graduate consisted of twenty-six students and the largest graduating class ever had 183 members.

Curriculum innovations followed from 1944 to 1953. New courses in mathematics were instituted. Even more, the science room was renovated and new science charts hung on the walls. Numerous other items were purchased also. In 1944 a course in Negro History was added and probably taught first by Mrs. Lena Bargyph. The course text was Carter G. Woodson's *The Negro In Our History (7th Edition, 1941)*. This book gave to the students

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an Afrocentric perspective as opposed to a Eurocentric focus. In 1951, Mrs. Cora Williams began teaching the course and used the Woodson text. This innovation instituted by Mr. Cobb antedated the Afro-American Studies movement of the 1960's by over twenty years. In other words, Lincoln High School and its teachers made the student culturally aware of the contributions that people in Africa and in the diaspora had made to the world and that "We are Somebody."! Even more, in our oral history interview of March 20, 1981, Mr. Cobb chortled over the fact that in 1954, when the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional Plessy vs. Ferguson in Brown vs. Board of Education on May 17, 1954, Mr. Smith--then Superintendent of Forrest City Public Schools--came to him and said: "I think that it is about time that you introduce a course in Negro History!"

Meanwhile, basketball for girls and boys came into existence also in 1944. The first art class was introduced in 1945. In 1946, band music, which the late Mr. John Isom (1922-1987) took over in 1947, became part of the curriculum. Further, football was introduced, and without any financial assistance from the Board of Education. It is important to bear in mind that the Board provided for only three items: (1) buildings, (2) heavy equipment, and (3) paid teachers salaries. This explains why student rallies were necessary from the start. In 1953, students purchased twelve typewriters and the first typing class began. The gymnasium was also built in that year because of Mr. Cobb's persistent lobbying before the Board and with influential leaders of the white community.

Finally, Professor Cobb served as Assistant Superintendent of the Forrest City Public Schools (1966-1971). This new position in the higher echelons of education in Forrest City was, indeed, unprecedented--the real benefits to the Black community, however, requires some commentary. The Supreme Court decision of Brown vs. Board of Education in 1954 undermined the role of the Black administrative class and their predominance in the realm of secondary education. Prior to the desegregation movement, Mr. Cobb, and other Black educators of his caliber, had autonomy in decisionmaking as long as the Black community was satisfied with his performance. This explains why the Board was mostly unaware of the curriculum initiatives. While the "Black middle class" in the days of "Plessy vs. Ferguson exercised a voice in determining a Principal's job status, this group held minor influence in the post-Brown era with whites in the Superintendent's Office. Mr. Cobb, too, as others across the deep South, was a victim of this oppressive change. Hence, Black administrators unjustly lost their jobs as Principals and, if lucky, were given subordinate jobs in the Superintendent's Office. Mr. R. Sharpe and Mr. Odie Jordan next assumed the mentoring role as Principals of Lincoln High School. In time, however, the integrationist movement eliminated the position held by these Black educators and robbed the future--hopefully only temporary--of successful Black administrative role models on the secondary level in the Forrest City Public Schools.

The year 1966 is, therefore, a watershed in the legacy of Professor Cobb and his predecessors. Shortly, thereafter, Lincoln High School lost its status and name. Nevertheless, Lincolnites will continue to travel "The Road To Lincoln High School!" in Forrest City--the sacred territory--to pay homage to the ancestral spirit of Professor Cota Theophilus Cobb--"The Father of Us All!"

by  
**ADELL PATTON, JR., Ph.D.**  
Department of History - Howard University, Washington D.C. 20059  
Class of '55

## Alumni Briefs

'46 - **PRECIOUS A. PRITCHETT**, retired recently after spending 31 years in the classroom. She is presently living in Brinkley, Ark.

'60 - **EDITH SIBLEY TOMLIN**, recently enrolled at the TARK 10 College a branch of St. Louis, University and says "is's never to late to learn.

'55 - **JACOB C. STARKS**, currently working for the University of Illinois Hospital & Clinics was promoted to Assistant Hospital Director.

'65 - **REV. HENRY L. BRADLEY**, founder of the "Gospel Recording Company" of Chicago, Illinois and records under the label "FAMI RECORDS". Two gospel LP's have been released - "Bought With A Price" and "Create In Me A Clean Heart" by Elder Bradley and the Golden Stars of Chicago.

'66 - **LILLIE BRADLEY**, wife of Rev. H. L. Bradley and co-founder of the recording company along with her husband.

## Class Reunions

The Class of 1964 will have their 25th year class reunion in Forrest City, Arkansas on June 29, 30, and July 1, 1989. For information please write or call:

**Delores Farr Morelon**  
P. O. Box 2083  
Forrest City, AR 72335  
PH. 633-2676

**Freddie Cross Montgomery**  
105 Early  
Forrest City, AR 72335  
PH. 633-5287

The Class of 1965 will have a 25th year class reunion in Forrest City, Arkansas in 1990 For information please write or call:

**Les Williams**  
622 North Cherry  
Forrest City, AR 72335  
PH. 633-5714

**Louise Fields**  
622 Mann  
Forrest City, AR 72335  
PH. 633-7737

# The President's Corner



'COMING DOWN' Thursday, July 21, 1977  
Built in 1931

It is very appropriate for me as president of MGNAAI to place my second and final article under the above picture. It is where so many of us spent many happy and sad memories. I'm sure the happy memories out-weigh the sad ones.

The tribute of which Dr. Adell Patton, Jr. so eloquently described in this issue speaks for all the alumni of Lincoln High School. I'm especially proud to be a graduate of Lincoln High because it was my graduating class that was Mr. Cobb's first, it was my class to have been the first to graduate from an accredited high school, and it was my class which consisted of twenty-six students (23 young ladies and 3 young men) mentioned in this tribute.

Doing several months of research I was able to locate original copies of our commencement exercise and Senior Class night programs that I would like to share with all the alumni in Mr. Cobb's honor. A reprint of the programs is on page four.

We the alumni officers would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Forrest City and Chicago chapters for their monetary contributions in financing the cost to produce and mail out the first and second Journals. We received dues from less than fifty alumni, therefore, this is the last issue of the Journal. I would like to express my thanks to all alumni for their contributions and articles appearing in both Journals.

In closing I would like to remind all alumni that 1991 is just a short time away. Start now planning to come to the reunion because the Forrest City Chapter has begun meeting to discuss another successful reunion.



## A TRIBUTE TO MR. C. T. COBB

Mr. C. T. Cobb was a source of inspiration to many people. He was a legend in his own right.

No other single individual has done more to enhance education in Forrest City and the entire state than he. Mr. Cobb was a capable and dynamic leader who knew how to get the job done.

Under Mr. Cobb's leadership, countless numbers of young people were inspired to achieve their goals and to always perform at their best.

Mr. Cobb knew the value of an education and attained his when times were trying. Believing that through God, all things are possible, he set forth goals in life and worked hard to achieve them.

He was active in his community, civic and social organizations, and the Madison Light Baptist Church.

He served the Forrest City School District for many years with distinction and in a number of capacities. He will probably be best remembered for his tenure as Principal of Lincoln High School, a position he held with esteem, honor, dignity, pride and respect.

We will forever cherish fond memories of the great man who has entered into the eternal joy of God.

Well done, thou good and faithful servant.

**Stewart Elementary School**  
Forrest City, Arkansas  
Mr. T. W. Moorehead, Principal  
Mr. W. L. Doby, Asst. Principal  
Faculty and Students

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## A TRIBUTE TO MR. C. T. COBB FROM CHARLES A. WALKER, CHANCELLOR UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT PINE BLUFF

Mr. Cota Theophilus Cobb, an educator and an active citizen in the community, lived an exemplary life dedicated to service in education, in the community, and in the church.

As an educator, for over forty years he provided professional leadership and expertise for the Forrest City Public Schools and, in the process, positively affected the lives of hundreds of faculty, staff, and students. The impact of his service to education is overwhelmingly apparent in the numbers of former students and colleagues who exhibit and promote his high standards and principles.

Mr. Cobb served the community in various capacities, among which were board member of the Housing Authority, a member of the North Arkansas District Association, and a member of the Summer Masonic Lodge No. 185. In all of his community roles, he was committed to improving the quality of life for all citizens.

As a Christian and member of Madison Light Missionary Baptist Church, Mr. Cobb was a faithful follower and leader. He exemplified his faith through exemplary living and service in various capacities—church clerk, Sunday School teacher, deacon, and trustee.

The Forrest City community is fortunate to have enjoyed the presence of Mr. C. T. Cobb, for the impact of that presence will be felt by many generations to come.

# Senior Class Night

## LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL

Wednesday, May 23

8:15 P. M.

Music ..... Class  
 Prayer ..... Girthia L. Morgan  
 Music ..... Class  
 History ..... Mary Cooper  
 Do You Remember ..... Dessie V. Nelson  
 Solo ..... Mattie L. Wamble  
 Poem ..... Rennie Washington  
 Oration ..... Katherine Key  
 Instrumental Solo ..... Charline Warren  
 Prophecy ..... Alvergia Twillie  
 Class Will ..... L. Christeener Ford  
 Solo ..... Verdell Fort  
 Toast to Teachers ..... Eddie Lewis  
 Presentation of Key ..... Raymond Ingram  
 Acceptance ..... Clarence Warren  
 Presentation of Gift ..... Ethel Dulaney  
 Acceptance ..... Mrs. L. E. Barygh  
 Class Song ..... Class  
**WILLIS WILLIAMS** ..... President  
**CHARLINE WARREN** ..... Secretary  
**KATHERINE KEY** ..... Treasurer  
**MRS. L. E. BARGYH** ..... Sponsor  
**C. T. COBB** ..... Principal

**1991 REUNION—**  
 Did you know that July 4, 1991 will fall on a Thursday.  
 Start now planning to come to the reunion. Sugges-  
 tions for activities will be helpful. Classes of 1931, 41,  
 51, 61 and 71 will be honored. Let us hear from you.

**MAROON & GOLD NATIONAL ALUMNI  
 ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
 P. O. Box 27  
 Helena, Arkansas 72342

# Commencement Exercises

## LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL

Friday, May 25, 1945

8:15 P. M.

Processional ..... "God of Our Fathers"  
 Prayer  
 Music ..... "Deep River" ..... Dawson  
 Glee Club  
 Salutatory ..... Willis Williams  
 Music ..... "Linda Lou" ..... Strickland  
 Glee Club  
 Valedictory ..... Charline Warren  
 Music ..... "Summer Time" ..... Gershwin  
 Glee Club  
 Class Address ..... Mr. M. S. Stuart  
 Vice President, Universal Life Insurance Co.,  
 Memphis; Tenn.  
 Music ..... "Going Home" ..... Dvorak  
 Glee Club  
 Presentation of Certificates ..... Mr. M. S. Smith  
 Superintendent of Schools  
 Announcements  
 Class Song ..... "Ode To Lincoln" ..... Class  
**C. T. COBB, Principal**

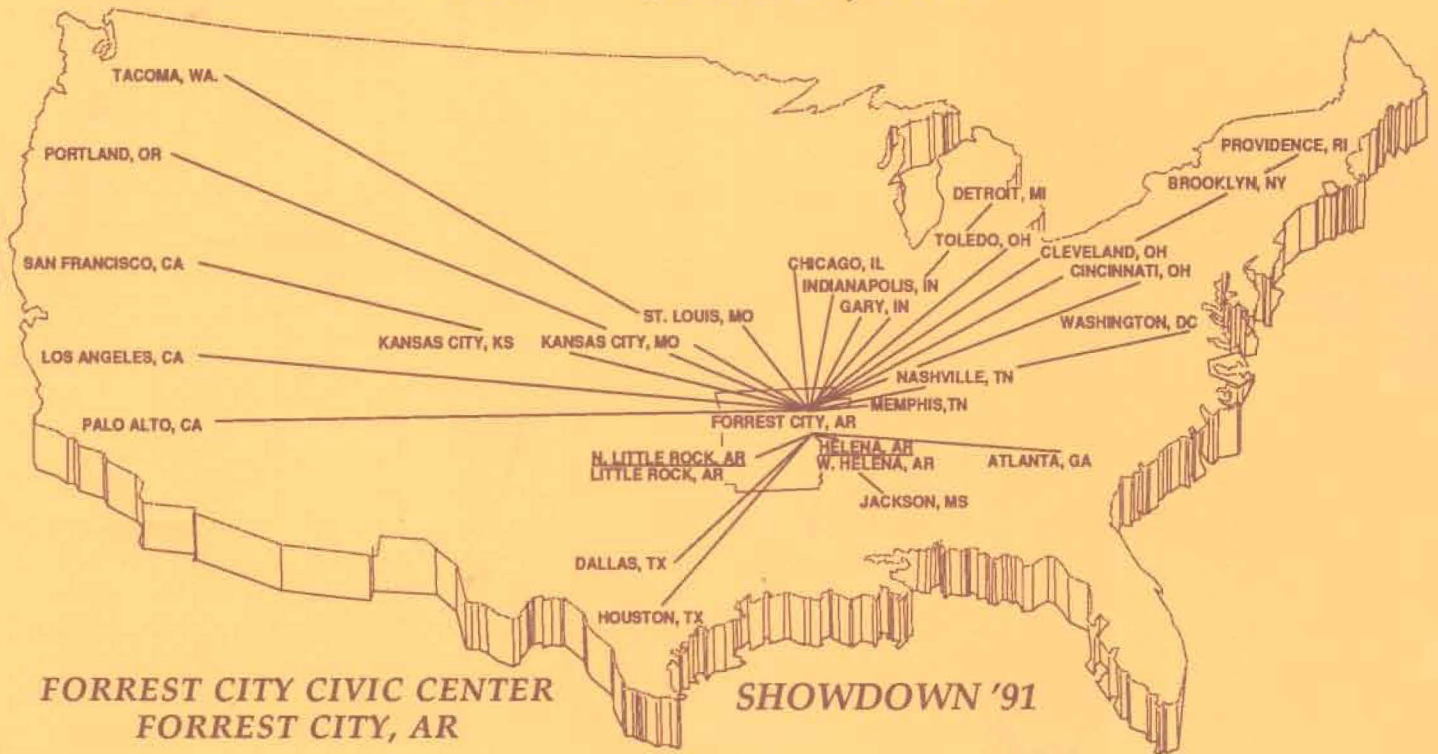
**NECROLOGY**  
**MGNAAI FACULTY MEMBERS**  
*Mrs. Ester Cobb — 1986*  
*Mr. John Isom — 1987*  
*Mrs. Wilveline Jordan — 1988*  
*Mr. C. T. Cobb — 1988*

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ALL ROADS ARE LEADING TO  
LINCOLN'S REUNION OF CLASSES  
1991 — JULY 5, 6 & 7



"JOURNEY TO THE STARS"