

Anderson, Jocelyn (“Jo”) Maxine (Williams) (May 21, 1939—May 24, 2015).



Williams was born in Dermott, Arkansas and was educated at the town’s Chico County Training School, which was built in 1929 with funding support from the Rosenwald Fund, an early 20th century national leader in improving educational opportunities for African-Americans.

After she and her family moved to St. Louis, Missouri, she attended its public schools, graduating from its Charles Sumner High School, which was the first high school for African-Americans west of the Mississippi River.

Jo started at Grinnell in January 1957, and in early 1958 was in charge of costumes for the College production of “Guys and Dolls,” which gained her entrance into the College drama group, Grinnell Players. A cast member said the costumes, especially for the Hot Box Girls and the gamblers --Nathan Detroit, Nicely Nicely Johnson and Big Jule of Chicago (Bob Weitzman)--were smashing. Jo also was a member of Sam’s Club, a social service organization, and in her first semester resided in Main Hall. (Above is her photo from the 1957 Cyclone.) Financial reasons prompted her withdrawal from the College in May 1958.

Jo returned in 1958 to St. Louis, where she was active in the Washington Tabernacle Missionary Baptist Church, which in the 1960’s was the site for national meetings of the civil rights movement with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speaking to audiences of over 4,000 in 1963 and 1964.

She was married to, and divorced from Hearn Humphrey Anderson. To this union was born one daughter, Nicole Patrice (Anderson) Borman.

After an extended battle with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), Joycelyn died on May 24, 2015. She is survived by her daughter, her sisters (E. Jean Williams, Catherine Boayue, Linda Nance (Herreld), Monnette Lartey and Deborah Benard (Perry)); her brothers (Harold F. Williams, James Edward Williams (Kristin) and Michael A. Williams); and a host of very dear nephews, nieces, aunts, uncles, cousins, church family and friends.

Duane W. Krohnke