

VOICES

Gladys Harper

GLADYS HARPER IS a lady of boundless energy with an abiding interest in history. A former board member of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania and former president of the Western Pennsylvania Genealogical Society, she recently established the Tri-Rivers African American Archival Society to promote the collection and dissemination of history about African-Americans.

Gladys got started in genealogy while a student in the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs in the 1970s. In recognition of her outstanding school record, she was nominated to membership in "Who's Who Among American Women." The membership application required her to complete a questionnaire about herself and her family. Gladys' father was an Irish Canadian who came to America in the early 1900s, serving in World War I. In tracing his family background, she became intrigued by genealogical research, and has continued that interest ever since.

She next did genealogical research on the family of her late husband, Judge Thomas Harper. Judge Harper was from Braddock, Pennsylvania, and, while a law student at Howard University, helped prepare the landmark school case of *Brown vs. Board of Education*. In 1957 he was admitted to the Allegheny County Bar and went on to become a well-known and beloved judge of the Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas until his death in 1983. His family's distinguished ancestors include a great-grandfather who was a state senator in South Carolina during Reconstruction.

Gladys has continued to work as a professional family history researcher, has conducted seminars for corporations like AT&T, and has been interviewed for numerous television programs and articles (nationally and locally) about genealogy and genealogical research. She is an avid collector of historical documents, and has a rich collection on the history of black Pittsburgh. ●