

## **Ella Lee Luallen Scott Stokes (1912-1996)**

Ella Lee Luallen is one of many important voices in the Black history of McLean County. She was born to Leslie (Lesley) J. Luallen and Margaret Clara (Jones) Luallen on June 30, 1912 in Corinth, Acorn County, Mississippi. She was born in the home of George Luallen, her paternal grandfather, which he owned. Her father, Leslie, was a farm worker and her mother, Margaret, was a domestic worker and cook. Margaret and her two siblings that lived into adulthood were raised by their grandmother, Julie Jones.<sup>1</sup> According to Ella, her grandmother Julie was “bought and sold in slavery” and therefore never knew her own brothers and sisters. Julie died in 1945 living to be about 108 years old.<sup>2</sup> Margaret and Ella were close with Margaret’s sister, Rosa Jones Meaderds, who also eventually moved to Bloomington, Illinois.<sup>3</sup>

When Ella was about four years old, her parents separated and she and her mother Margaret moved to Humboldt, Tennessee. In Humboldt, they lived on a plantation that grew strawberries and Margaret would drive a horse and buggy into town to do domestic work.<sup>4</sup> Margaret rented the home they lived in from the white plantation owner. By the time Ella was seven or eight, she and her mother left Tennessee for Bloomington, Illinois. They came to Bloomington on account of Margaret’s uncle, retired teacher Tanzie (Nannie) Gibson who reported that there were better economic opportunities for her there.<sup>5</sup> When Margaret and Ella first moved to Bloomington, they stayed with Nannie at 1601 West Miller Street.<sup>6</sup> As Margaret continued to work domestic jobs around town, she was eventually able to rent a home on Cherry Street in Normal for a short period of time before settling in Bloomington on East Moulton Street.<sup>7</sup>

Although Ella’s biological father, Leslie Luallen, and her mother had separated, her father also moved to the Bloomington area around the same time as Margaret and Ella. In 1920, shortly after arriving to Bloomington, Leslie was arrested for threatening to kill Margaret over allegedly owing him \$20.<sup>8</sup> This incident was reported in the local paper, *The Pantagraph*. Less than a year later in 1921, Margaret officially filed for divorce and retained sole custody of Ella citing “cruel and repeated cruelty” as the reason for leaving Leslie.<sup>9</sup>

After divorcing her first husband, Margaret married Arshell Barker on April 20, 1921.<sup>10</sup> Margaret and Arshell stayed married until Margaret’s death in 1969. Ella had a close relationship with Arshell, whom she referred to as “step-daddy.” After Margaret and Arshell were married, they first lived on East Moulton Street before permanently moving and owning their own home on 1212 West Oakland Avenue.<sup>11</sup> Margaret and Arshell lived at the house on West Oakland for years, and Ella and her second husband spent periods of time living there as well.

Ella stayed in school throughout her childhood and throughout the family’s various moves. She attended a one-room schoolhouse in both Corinth, Mississippi and Humboldt, Tennessee.

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<sup>1</sup> “Mrs. Barker Returns,” *The Pantagraph*, January 10, 1943.

<sup>2</sup> Ella Lee Stokes, interview by Dr. Mildred Pratt, January 3, 1987, oral history transcript, The Bloomington-Normal Black History Project, McLean County Museum of History, Bloomington, IL, 4.

<sup>3</sup> “Mrs. Rosa Meaderds Dies at Home Here,” *The Pantagraph*, June 10, 1932.

<sup>4</sup> Stokes, oral history transcript, 2-3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> “Has Husband Arrested,” *The Pantagraph*, April 19, 1920.

<sup>7</sup> Stokes, oral history transcript, 6-7.

<sup>8</sup> “Has Husband Arrested.”

<sup>9</sup> “Bill for Divorce,” *The Pantagraph*, March 23, 1921.

<sup>10</sup> Obituary of Arshell Barker, *The Pantagraph*, April 5, 1972.

<sup>11</sup> Stokes, oral history transcript, 12.

Her school in Humboldt was two miles from her home, forcing her to walk a long distance each day in order to attend.<sup>12</sup> Going to school was important to Ella and although she could not attend at times due to the distance and occasional bad weather, she made school a priority from a young age. In Bloomington she attended Raymond School, Irving School, Emerson School, Bloomington High School.<sup>13</sup> During her time as a student, Ella demonstrated academic success. In 1924, at just 11 years old, *The Pantagraph* published an announcement that Ella would be overseeing and performing a recitation at Macedonia Baptist Church, located at 1008 1/2 West Washington Street.<sup>14</sup> Two years later, she was reported as having one of the highest writing examination scores in her class.<sup>15</sup> Ella was proud of continuing her education for as long as she did, far surpassing the highest level of education her parents attained, which was fourth grade.<sup>16</sup> Ella was able to continue formal schooling until she reached the ninth grade where she dropped out after one semester.<sup>17</sup>

By the late 1920s, Ella married her first husband, James Thomas Scott. Ella had her one and only child with him, William DeLoss Scott. He was born March 13, 1929 at Ella's mother's house on West Oakland Avenue.<sup>18</sup> In the aftermath of the stock market crash and the beginnings of the Great Depression, Ella, her husband and son moved to live with her husband's family in Missouri. They lived there just nine months before coming back to Bloomington and ultimately separating.<sup>19</sup> Their marriage was brief, and after returning to Bloomington, James moved in with his grandmother, Effie Henderson at 1302 West Jackson Street.<sup>20</sup>

After their separation, James did not play a large role in Ella's life. According to the McLean County Sheriff's Criminal Record in the McLean County Jail Registers, a James Scott was charged with "no support" in February 1931, meaning that he was likely not fulfilling financial obligations to Ella and their son William.<sup>21</sup> The first mention of Ella in the Bloomington city directories was in 1932 and she appeared to be single.<sup>22</sup> Ella recalled that James Scott died in Peoria in 1959.<sup>23</sup> Upon returning to Bloomington, she moved back into the house on West Oakland Avenue with her mother, stepfather, and son, and remained there until marrying her second husband in 1936.

Throughout her adult life, Ella held several different jobs including domestic work and cooking. Notably, she worked for a house that was part of Bloomington's infamous red-light district. Referred to as "The Line" due to its proximity to the railroad tracks, it was home to

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<sup>12</sup> Stokes, oral history transcript, 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>14</sup> Bloomington City Directory, 1926. By 1930, Macedonia Baptist Church is absent from the Bloomington City Directories.

<sup>15</sup> "Interesting Talk is Heard by Pupils at Irving School," *The Pantagraph*, May 22, 1926.

<sup>16</sup> Stokes, oral history transcript, 11-12.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 20. City records said her mother, Margaret, was living on West Oakland Street.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Sheriff's Criminal Record, McLean County, 1931, Archives, Illinois Regional Archives Depository - Illinois State University Branch.

<sup>22</sup> Bloomington City Directory, 1932.

<sup>23</sup> Stokes, oral history transcript, 22; "James Thomas Scott." Find a Grave, 2021, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/228241648/james-thomas-scott>. Records from Find a Grave corroborate Ella's recollection. He died November 22, 1959 in Peoria, Illinois.

brothels on Moulton, Elm, Wright, and Oakland streets.<sup>24</sup> Sex work was part of the landscape of labor in Bloomington starting well before the first World War through the 1960s. There were even brothels present near the downtown area before the turn of the century, such as the incident where “twenty-two employees and eight owners” were arrested for violating a House of Ill-Fame law in 1884.<sup>25</sup>

From the last half of 1905 through December 31, 1945, there were 207 women arrested for being a “streetwalker,” “inmate,” and “keeper.”<sup>26</sup> While a “streetwalker” is a person accused of soliciting sex in public, “inmates” were sex workers that were working out of a brothel. A “keeper” would have been the person running the house, also known as a madam. Brothels were often referred to as “houses of ill-fame” or “disorderly houses” in the jail registers and *The Pantagraph*. These “houses of ill-fame” were tolerated by the city’s law enforcement due to general political corruption and the understanding that eradicating sex work would be nearly impossible. During the Prohibition Era, “The Line” was a place where other vices such as gambling, and alcohol sales and consumption were common. In the relatively scattered police raids of these brothels, madams were typically the only ones charged with alcohol offenses while the sex workers, or “inmates,” paid a minimal fine.<sup>27</sup> In general, law enforcement tolerated “The Line” due to the fact that a clear vice district made the social ills of the era secluded to one area and, thus, it was much easier to surveil and control.

During the Prohibition Era, Ella lived in close proximity to “The Line” and was familiar with the activities in the vice district. In 1931, the family home on West Oakland Avenue was raided by police. Her stepfather, Arshell Barker was required to pay a \$30 fine and her aunt, Rose Meaderds, was taken into custody and required to serve 20 days in the county jail for being an “inmate.”<sup>28</sup> Three other individuals, Jess Smith, Mrs. Jess Smith, and John White were also charged with being “inmates.” Rose, Mr. and Mrs. Jess Smith, and John White were all taken into custody for allegedly violating a city ordinance.<sup>29</sup> This particular raid could have had more to do with alcohol or gambling rather than prostitution, since the term “disorderly house” is conveniently flexible. According to census data, there were often roomers at the house on West Oakland, so having multiple unrelated people at the house would not have been unusual.<sup>30</sup> Ella and her stepfather Arshell are absent from the jail registers on that evening meaning they paid their fine before they were booked. Arshell was fined \$30 before being released, while Ella was fined \$10.<sup>31</sup>

Raids such as this were random and sporadic in Bloomington during this time period, being implemented so as to give the appearance that law enforcement was making an effort to police the vice district and surrounding areas. However, the activities that took place on “The Line”

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<sup>24</sup> Moran, Frank. “Prostitution, Police and City Culture in a Small Midwestern City: A History, 1900-1960.” *Journal of Crime & Justice* 13, no. 2 (1990): 153.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 151.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, Beverly. “Prostitution in McLean County, Illinois. 1883-1945,” Presented at the Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, November 1999.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, Beverly “Prohibition in McLean County, Illinois, 1920-1933,” resented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, 1988.

<sup>28</sup> “11 Colored Persons Are Caught in Raid,” *The Pantagraph*, February 27, 1931.

<sup>29</sup> Jail Register, McLean County, 1930-1934, Archives, Illinois Regional Archives Depository - Illinois State University Branch.

<sup>30</sup> 1930 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2002 and 1930 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2012.

<sup>31</sup> “11 Colored Persons are Caught in Raid,” *The Pantagraph*, February 27, 1931.

were well known to the community and law enforcement. By keeping the activities on “The Line” to one neighborhood, law enforcement and public health were more easily able to control the activities as well as monitor sexually transmitted infections and diseases.<sup>32</sup>

There is a well-documented understanding that race also played a role in the politics of life on “The Line.” Although the houses weren’t completely segregated, there seemed to be an understanding that some of the houses were for white sex workers and white clientele, while others were for Black sex workers and Black clientele. In 1986, when asked about living in proximity to “The Line,” Robert Gatson stated in his interview for the Bloomington-Normal Black History Project (BNBHP) that:

“Pretty near every Black person in town lived near the red-light district. That’s where they had them at, you know. They don’t have none in the white community...I was close to it. I used to live right next door to a sporting house. In fact one time MacArthur Street east of Main – they had two blocks of houses that housed white prostitutes...They didn’t have any Black women or men in the white houses. But on the street over on Elm Street was where the Black houses were.”<sup>33</sup>

However, there were some Black folks that worked in the white brothels. In 1988, Claude Hursey, a Black businessman from Bloomington who ran the Third Ward Club (a Black social club) and had policy connections in town, reflected on the race politics of “The Line” during his BNBHP interview, stating that:

“...they had a whole street down there from Wright Steet clear down to Gridley Street. Moulton, there was Moulton Street...On the south side of the street they had about six or seven white sporting houses...Up on Elm Street they had five or six not so good a places as there was down there where the white, and that’s where most all the Colored was...Colored couldn’t go to the white sporting house, but whites could go to the Colored ones...And those white sporting houses they had Colored maids and everything, working and cleaning.”<sup>34</sup>

Ella was one of those Black women that worked in a white sporting house. She worked in the predominantly white brothel cleaning, pressing clothes, cooking, and serving customers by answering the door and providing refreshments. Ella would also collect the money and turn the cash over to the madam.<sup>35</sup> Although Ella reported in her 1987 BNBHP oral history interview that the brothel was mostly white sex workers, she did recall that the madam of the house hired one Black woman while Ella was working there, but remembered that she left after about a week.<sup>36</sup>

Racism was one of the factors that led to the permanent closing of “The Line.” While there was a relatively small population of Black people in Bloomington throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the city saw a three percent increase throughout the 1950s. Much of the Black population, including Ella and her family, lived near “The Line.” Although several white brothels were located on “The Line” as well, the anxieties of the predominantly white greater community viewed that part of the city as an eyesore. Thus, much of “The Line” was bulldozed between 1950 and 1957 in a “slum removal” effort and the Moulton Street name was changed to McArthur Avenue (after the renowned military general) most likely to remove “unsavory”

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<sup>32</sup> Morn, “Prostitution, Police and City Culture in a Small Midwestern City,” 155-156.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Gatson, interview by Dr. Mildred Pratt, February 28, 1986, oral history transcript, The Bloomington-Normal Black History Project, McLean County Museum of History, Bloomington, IL, 20.

<sup>34</sup> Claude Hursey, interview with Dr. Mildred Pratt, July 22, 1988, oral history transcript, The Bloomington-Normal Black History Project, McLean County Museum of History, Bloomington, IL, 11.

<sup>35</sup> Stokes, oral history transcript, 9.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

associations.<sup>37</sup> The brothels were demolished, as well as several Black residences. Woodhill Towers and other public housing have since replaced what used to be “The Line.”<sup>38</sup>

The West Oakland Street raid in 1931 was not Ella’s only negative encounter with local law enforcement. She was taken into custody in 1934 on an assault charge. Listed in the jail register as “Ella Scott,” she was arrested on July 14, 1934 and released on \$1,000 bond two days later (which would be approximately \$20,000 in 2022).<sup>39</sup> The assault was not detailed in *The Pantagraph*, nor did Ella mention the incident in her oral history. She was also caught shoplifting later in her life on August 30, 1978, after taking a steak valued at \$4.38 (or approximately \$18.20 in 2022) from the Washington Square IGA on West Washington Street in Bloomington.<sup>40</sup> After appearing in court, she was fined \$50 and sentenced to a year of court supervision.<sup>41</sup> These incidents clearly did not define Ella as she preferred to focus on other positive aspects of her life. These experiences do however illustrate the complexities of individuals and how one’s circumstances shape the decisions we make.

On December 26, 1936, Ella and Alfonso Stokes married in Peoria, Illinois.<sup>42</sup> Alfonso was originally from Bloomington and born in the city on December 29, 1905 to Alfred and Margaret (Smith) Stokes.<sup>43</sup> Alfonso worked various laborer jobs throughout his life, including working for the Works Progress Administration (WPA) New Deal program during the Great Depression. He also worked as a maintenance man at Illinois State University.<sup>44</sup> Ella and Alfonso did not have children together, thus William Scott remained Ella’s only child. At the time of Alfonso’s death in 1975, Ella and Alfonso had been married for 36 years.

It is clear that Ella deeply cared for her family members, and that is especially true of her son William, who was sometimes referred to as Bill. Ella lovingly remembered William as being “spoiled” as an only child and only grandchild.<sup>45</sup> She sent William to St. Mary’s Catholic School in Bloomington, not because of her own religious beliefs (as she identified as Baptist), but rather to send him to school with neighborhood friends (the sons of a Black family by the name of Holmes who came from Chicago).<sup>46</sup> After attending Saint Mary’s, William continued to practice Catholicism and went by William Joseph Scott. Ella also began to go through the catechesis process to become a Catholic, but ultimately would have had to prove that the divorce from her first husband was for a good reason in the eyes of the Church.<sup>47</sup> Ella did not wish to go through that process, so she dropped the religious instruction and remained a Baptist. She supported her son and his religious choices, and they would attend each other’s church services on Sundays. She even sent William to a Catholic boarding school in Alabama for half a semester before he

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<sup>37</sup> Morn, “Prostitution, Police and City Culture in a Small Midwestern City,” 159-160.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Jail Register, McLean County, 1930-1934, Archives, Illinois Regional Archives Depository – Illinois State University Branch; Measuring Worth.com, <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/uscompare/>, Date Accessed July 31, 2022.

<sup>40</sup> Measuring Worth.com, <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/uscompare/>, Date Accessed July 31, 2022.

<sup>41</sup> *The Pantagraph*, October 31, 1978, 19.

<sup>42</sup> The Obituary of Alfonso Stokes, *The Pantagraph*, January 2, 1975.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Stokes, oral history transcript, 23.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 28.

returned home and began attending Bloomington High School.<sup>48</sup> Despite the differences in denomination, Christian faith was important to Ella, and it played a large role in their family life.

William attended Bloomington High School for another half of a semester before deciding to join the Navy. He was in the Navy for four years beginning in 1947. He was stationed in Italy and on destroyers out of Norfolk, Virginia.<sup>49</sup> After leaving the Navy, he eventually found work as a janitor and construction worker in Bloomington. William also became a self-taught golfer. His grandmother Margaret was gifted golf clubs by a family she worked for, and William would practice with the clubs in the back yard. Later, he began to caddie at Highland Park Golf Course in Bloomington.<sup>50</sup> William remained an avid golfer for the rest of his life, playing in tournaments throughout Illinois and the Midwest.

As previously mentioned, Ella worked a wide range of jobs throughout her life. Even through the Great Depression, Ella reported that she always managed to stay employed. She worked for wealthy families and at a hotel throughout the worst of the Depression years.<sup>51</sup> While many people in the area suffered lack of work prospects, by working for wealthy people, Ella was able to maintain job security.

During World War II, Ella worked at the defense plant, Williams-Oil-O-Matic. The factory began as a heating plant to address the coal shortage during World War I. In 1940, prior to the United States joining World War II, the company was one of three in the nation charged with producing an automatic anti-aircraft firing mechanism. They continued to manufacture a variety of supplies for the war effort after the U.S. joined the conflict, and by May 1942 the factory was running 24/7 to meet demand for wartime manufacturing.<sup>52</sup> Ella was one of the 300 women that worked there due to the fact that most of the men of working age were serving in the military.<sup>53</sup> Black workers were also invited on staff in order to meet demand. There was only one other Black woman that worked the morning shift with Ella. At the factory, Ella cleaned parts for airplanes and was part of a larger home front mobilization where women across the country went to work in the factories in order to meet demand for wartime manufacturing.<sup>54</sup>

Other than her brief time in factory work and her long history of domestic labor, Ella also worked in restaurants in Bloomington. She learned how to cook professionally from her stepfather, Arshell Barker. She worked at Clay Brice's Restaurant, an establishment that served Blacks in the area. The restaurant was located in downtown Bloomington (although the exact location cannot be determined with available resources). She also had stints cooking in a pool hall and in a restaurant her stepfather managed.<sup>55</sup> Arshell learned to cook after coming back from serving in World War I. In Bloomington, he worked as a private cook for prominent people in town including Alfred O. Brown (a book publisher) and members of the Mecherle family that owned State Farm Insurance Company.<sup>56</sup> Ella also did day work for the Mecherle family and worked for them for 25 years until she broke her leg and retired in 1981.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Stokes, oral history transcript, 28.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>52</sup> Kemp, Bill. "Williams Oil-O-Matic plant beat plowshares into swords" *The Pantagraph*, August 30, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Stokes, oral history transcript, 17.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

Despite Ella's packed work schedule, she found time to be an active member of the Bloomington community, especially the Black community. She was a member of the Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church, the Civic Women's Club, the NAACP, the Elks Lodge, and the Auxiliary of the Redd-Williams American Legion Post 163.<sup>58</sup> Ella recalled her mother Margaret joining the Auxiliary of the American Legion in the mid-1920s and Ella joined after that. They were able to do so due to Ella's stepfather serving in the Army during World War I.<sup>59</sup> For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bloomington's American Legion posts were segregated, and the Redd-Williams post was for Black Legion members.<sup>60</sup> Both Ella and her mother Margaret held leadership roles in the Redd-Williams post, and according to the *The Pantagraph's* coverage of the Redd-Williams post elections, Ella was elected chairman of the membership drive in 1973, historian in 1975, and membership chairman in 1976.<sup>61</sup>

In 1941, the Redd-Williams post, in coordination with the Regular Fellows Club, a local Black social club, threw a "Colored Ball" around President Roosevelt's birthday in order to raise money for the fight against polio (then known as infantile paralysis). The proceeds from the ball would go to the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, later known as the March of Dimes.<sup>62</sup> The ball was, according to the local newspaper, "the first and so far as is known the only such ball in Central Illinois."<sup>63</sup> More than 350 tickets were sold, resulting in over \$100 (or approximately \$2,012 in 2022) raised for the foundation.<sup>64</sup> Entertainment included a tap dancer and singing by women from Illinois State Normal University (today known as ISU), including Miriam Ali who was voted as Miss Bronze America.<sup>65</sup>

Ella and her mother Margaret worked together to plan the 1942 ball. They, and other members of the Redd-Williams post planning committee, were photographed in the McBarnes Memorial Building making preparations for a larger event.<sup>66</sup> That year, an even greater turnout was expected and a Black orchestra from Joliet was slated as the entertainment.<sup>67</sup> Ella and her mother were part of a national movement that worked through community efforts just like this to support the funding of research for the eventual vaccine that has almost completely eradicated polio today.

While Ella preferred to focus on the happy parts of her life, she did experience hardships. Ella recalled her son's death as one of the hardest experiences of her life. William died in a tragic work accident on November 25, 1980. On that day, William was working for a subcontractor of his employer, R.A. Cullinan & Sons Inc., Tremont. While he was standing near the top of a truck loaded with bales of hay, which was traveling on Interstate 74 east of Goodfield, William's head struck the bridge of the overpass they passed under and he was knocked to the ground, falling in

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., project participant information sheet.

<sup>59</sup> Stokes, oral history transcript, 13.

<sup>60</sup> The Red-Williams Post disbanded in 1979 due to lack of membership. See Johnson, Hannah E. "Bynum, Lincoln," McClean County Museum of History, <https://www.mchistory.org/research/biographies/bynum-lincoln> for more information on the history of the segregated American Legion posts.

<sup>61</sup> "Williams auxiliary in membership drive," *The Pantagraph*, May 9, 1973; "Redd Williams Auxiliary elects new officers," *The Pantagraph*, July, 11, 1975; "Auxiliary to install new officers," *The Pantagraph*, June, 13, 1976.

<sup>62</sup> Anthony Borman, "Quartet Serenades Partygoers at President's Birthday Ball," *The Pantagraph*, August 30, 2020.

<sup>63</sup> "Colored People Change Ball Date to Jan. 28," *The Pantagraph*, January 19, 1941.

<sup>64</sup> "Colored Ball Nets Over \$100," *The Pantagraph*, January 30, 1941; Measuring Worth.com, <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/uscompare/>, Date Accessed August 25, 2022.

<sup>65</sup> "Miss America To Sing Jan. 28 at Colored Ball," *The Pantagraph*, January 23, 1941.

<sup>66</sup> "Make Colored Ball Plans," *The Pantagraph*, January 25, 1942.

<sup>67</sup> "Colored Ball Ticket Sake Opens Tonight," *The Pantagraph*, January 21, 1942.

the road. He was then struck by oncoming traffic and died shortly after while undergoing emergency surgery.<sup>68</sup> He was 51 years old at the time of his death. William was survived by his second wife Sandol Jones Scott, two sons, three daughters, and three grandchildren. He married Sandol only a few weeks prior on October 25.<sup>69</sup> After William's death, the Highland Park Golf Course hosted the William Scott Memorial Golf Tournament in his honor.<sup>70</sup>

Despite experiencing tragedy and difficult times, Ella seemed determined to focus on positivity. In 1975 she was interviewed by *The Pantagraph* for a Thanksgiving story. When asked what she was thankful for she replied that she was happy to be living and that she was thankful for her family.<sup>71</sup> Ella reported that the close relationship she had with her mother helped her throughout her life.<sup>72</sup> She and her mother were part of the same community organizations, and Ella's immediate family lived with her mother and stepfather off and on throughout their lives. The love they had for one another is clear. Moreover, the love Ella had for her community is also evident in her life's actions. Despite the hard times, she felt that her family and her community was always there for her. Ella's story illustrates the complexities of a person and a life rich in diverse experiences.

On April 19, 1996, Ella Lee Stokes passed away at the age of 83 at the BroMenn Regional Medical Center in Normal.<sup>73</sup> She spent the last several years of her life living at the Care Centre of Bloomington located at 1509 North Calhoun Street.<sup>74</sup> Ella was survived by her grandchildren, Alfreda Jones, Christine Watkins, and Stanley Scott, as well as ten great-grandchildren and four great-great grandchildren.<sup>75</sup> Her funeral took place on April 23, 1996 at Kibler-Smith Memorial Home in Bloomington.<sup>76</sup> Following the funeral service, Ella was buried at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery where she was laid to rest next to her husband, Alfonso Stokes.

By: Maria Mears, 2022.

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<sup>68</sup> Jill Gleason, "Man Killed along I-74," *The Pantagraph*, November 26, 1980.

<sup>69</sup> The Obituary of William Joseph Scott, *The Pantagraph*, November 27, 1980.

<sup>70</sup> Stokes, oral history transcript, 28.

<sup>71</sup> McKinney, "Thanksgiving Aplenty-Even on Dreary Day," *The Pantagraph*, November 27, 1975.

<sup>72</sup> Stokes, oral history transcription, participant information sheet.

<sup>73</sup> "Ella L. Stokes," *The Pantatgraph*, April 21, 1996.

<sup>74</sup> Bloomington City Directory, 1996.

<sup>75</sup> "Ella L. Stokes"

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.