

Tressie Bowman

Jan 16 1899 - Oct 20 1992

AAFA# 0039

BOWMAN, TRESSIE E.

On Tuesday, October 20, 1992 of Thurmont, MD, formerly of Rockville, MD, beloved wife of the late Lewis O. Bowman Sr.; mother of the late Lucy Shull Stevens; mother-in-law of Robert J. Stevens of Rockville, MD; grandmother of William L. Stevens of Iiamsville, MD, David A. Stevens of Thurmont, MD and Dolly Stevens-Tootle of Purcellville, VA. Four great-grandchildren also survive. A graveside service will be held at Parklawn Memorial Park on Friday, October 23, 1992 at 11 a.m. Friends may assemble at cemetery entrance at 10:45 a.m. Please omit flowers. Memorial contributions may be made to the American Cancer Society. Arrangements by PUMPHREY'S COLONIAL FUNERAL HOME.

Biography: Tressie Bowman

By Lucy Shull Stevens and Gil Alford

The lady many of us have come to love and know as Tressie Bowman was born 16 January 1899 in Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas. She was the daughter of Leander Lemuel and Mary Pamela (White) Nash. Leander, called Lec, was born 12 November 1859 in Limestone County, Alabama. Mary was born 12 May 1866 in Aurora, Kane County, Illinois. So Tressie began her life with an attraction for both the north and the south.

By the time she was nine years old the family had moved to Texarkana, Arkansas, where her mother died in March 1908. At that time Tressie had two sisters living: Mary, about 19 years old, and Frankie, about seven. Tressie's father was a railroad man and was gone from home much of the time. Mary did most of the housework and took care of her younger sisters, but in 1910, at age 21, Mary died. Mr. Nash tried to get live-in help but finally gave up and placed Tressie and Frankie in a Catholic convent, Sacred Heart Academy. Neither of the girls were of the Catholic faith; however, their father came home and took them to the Methodist Church as often as he could.

Later Tressie's father married a widow, Josephine (Sheppard) Myers, the daughter of Senator Sheppard from Arkansas. Josephine had her own children, including a set of twins. She owned a small store in Doddridge, or Fouke, Arkansas, and Tressie and all the children had to help in the store. The lady next door had the telephone exchange in her home, and she offered to teach Tressie how to run the switchboard. She later became a telephone operator.

Tressie remembers one of the most thrilling moments of her life as the time she heard news of the Armistice in

World War I. She opened all the keys on her switchboard and rang everyone on the exchange so they could hear it from New York. She could hear all kinds of praise and thanksgiving from the mothers of sons who were "over there" and she could hardly see for the tears in her eyes.

While she was working the switchboard, Tressie "met" James Matthew Shull. He was born 24 June 1884 in Sabine Parish, Louisiana, the son of William Levi and Lucy (Maines) Shull.



"Matt" was a bookkeeper for a lumber company which was served by the switchboard. They seemed to fall in love with each other's voices, and although Matt had told her he had only one leg, their "relationship" continued. They finally met in person and were married three months later on 14 Dec 1918 in Texarkana.

After the birth of their daughter Lucy (AAFA DAR Project Officer Lucy Shull Stevens), the family moved to Louisiana where Matt worked in the

court house in Minden and was Clerk of Court in Coushatta. Matt went to Jacksonville, Florida, about 1924-25 when the "boom" started. Tressie, her father (who had divorced Josephine), and Lucy followed by train. From there the family returned to Coushatta, Louisiana, where Matt started his own Abstract and Title Company. He later co-owned another similar company in Many, Sabine Parish, Louisiana, which he still had an interest in when he died on 20 November 1934 in Caddo Parish, Louisiana. He is buried in the Bayou Scie Methodist Church Cemetery near Zwolle, Sabine Parish, Louisiana.

Before he died, however, the family lived in several other towns in north Louisiana—wherever there was an oil boom. During that period Tressie signed on with the Fuller Brush Company and as the only female salesperson led all the salesmen in the six parish area. It was said that she could talk the tail off a donkey and sell it back to him.

Matt died 20 November 1934, after a lingering illness following a stroke. After his death, Tressie and daughter Lucy moved to Shreveport, Louisiana, where Tressie took a job as a practical nurse. In 1935, her sister Frankie's husband was able to get her a job with the American Cotton Co-op Exchange in New Orleans where they lived for a year and a half. When that job played out, they returned to Minden, Louisiana, and Tressie worked in various jobs in and around Shreveport. From there she moved to Dallas, Texas, where she worked for the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), a government agency established by President Hoover in the early 1930's to aid businesses and home owners with loans.

By that time Lucy had finished high school and business school. When she joined her mother in Dallas in 1939 she

took a Federal Civil Service exam and began to work for the Federal Reserve. In 1941, Lucy received an appointment in Washington D. C. with the government. She moved there and lived with her aunt Frankie and her husband. Lucy met her future husband, Bob Stevens, on her first day of work at the Veterans Administration.

Nine months after their marriage, Tressie could stand it no longer—she moved to Washington to be near her daughter and her new husband. Since Bob went into service just six months after the marriage, Tressie lived for a while with Lucy. Later, she got an apartment in Washington and lived alone. Tressie worked for the RFC in both Dallas and Washington D. C. When the RFC closed, she went to work for the National Naval Medical Center as a library assistant. She retired in 1962. Tressie joined the National Genealogical Society and at one time served as their treasurer and councilor.

Tressie loved to dance, and those who are old enough will remember all the dances held for the servicemen during World War II at the USO, where Tressie did volunteer work. She met Lewis Orlando Bowman, Sr. at a government dance, and they were married 17 June 1949 in Washington D.C.

Lewis was born in 1904 in Hambleton, West Virginia, and died in 1976 in Bethesda, Maryland. Lewis also liked to dance and they both liked to travel, so they traveled extensively and danced frequently. Lewis was a sail maker and leather worker at the Naval Gun Factory. Needless to say the couple made many genealogy research trips and attended several reunions.

From birth Tressie had an Alford connection. Her mother, Mary Pamela White, was the granddaughter of Pamela Sikes. From there she traces her ancestors back through five additional generations of Sikes to Increase Sikes, Sr. who married Abigail

Fowler in 1670. Abigail was the daughter of Joanna Alford Fowler. Joanna was the sister of Benedict Alford and Alexander Alvord, both progenitors of notable New England branches of the family. Tressie is able to trace her Alford's back to the mid-1500's in England.

Tressie's first husband gave her another Alford connection. Matthew Shull's great grandmother was Lucy Alford Maines of Sabine Parish, Louisiana, daughter of Jacob Alford. Jacob, who moved from North Carolina, with a short stay in Georgia, to Louisiana in the very early 1800's, was the progenitor of most of the Sabine Parish Alford's, the Washington and Tangipahoa Parish Alford's, and many of the Alford's of Pike and Walthall Counties in Mississippi.

In July 1970 Tressie published her first issue of the *ALFORD FAMILY BULLETIN*. The stated purpose of her bulletin was to prove the ancestry of Jacob Alford and to learn the connections between the New Kent County, Virginia, Alford's and those of New England. That first issue was a 15 page document with page one being a letter explaining and introducing the publication. The other 14 pages were packed with census data, probate record indexes, abstracts of wills, information from pension applications, deed abstracts and indexes, marriage lists, and a family chart on Jacob Alford and the data applied to a myriad of states. She continued to publish these bulletins, at the rate of about two annually, usually in July and December until the fall of 1979 when she published her final issue. There was a hiatus from December 1971 until July 1976 and some years she managed only one issue. In 1977 she experienced a fire in the basement of her building and lost some of her records. She had cataract surgery in the fall of 1979 and was scheduled for an implant. That, together with other surgery and illness in 1978, and the ever increasing postal rates, nearly ended the bulletin. In 1971

the subscription was \$2 per year, and when she stopped in 1979 the price had increased to \$7. Never did she publish an issue that was not packed with interesting and useful information on Alford's.

While most of her data came from her own personal research, Tressie depended on input from readers for some of her bulletins, and there are names mentioned in the bulletins who are members of the Alford American Family Association today. Some of those noted are Lucille Mehrkam, Rod Bush, Alberta (Arletta) Skillen, Robert S. Barrows, D. L. Alford, Rose Alford Shelton, and Margaret Windham.

Tressie Bowman was the first person to undertake a project which addressed all Alford's in all geographic areas and in all branches of the family. Other important works such as Colonel Harlee's *KINFOLKS* and Hugh Edwin Alford's *IN SEARCH OF MY ALFORD ANCESTORS* limit themselves to a small part of the family.

Over the years Tressie researched and collected information on Alford's by the thousands. Data was meticulously entered on individual records—3 x 5 inch slips called pea slips. She also prepared family group records on each family she found. Copies of all of these have been made available to AAFA either by Mrs. Bowman or through her daughter, Lucy Shull Stevens, an AAFA member and the Association DAR project officer. The family group records are available to members from the AAFA library.

As long as Alford descendants engage in research on their family history, Mrs. Bowman will be remembered. They may not use her bulletins or even see her name, but all will be indebted to her for the work she did in pioneering research on Alford family history. As an expression of appreciation for her work, she was the first person to receive a lifetime honorary AAFA membership.

Tressie Bowman in Hall of Fame

At the 1990 Annual Meeting in Raleigh, NC, Tressie Bowman, AAFA #39, was named as the first inductee into the Alford Hall of Fame by Alford American Family Association then-President Lodwick Alford. Mrs. Bowman's early Alford research, much of it now in AAFA hands, is an invaluable resource and gave our Association a firm basis from which to establish itself. Below is the text of the Proclamation Letter.

PROCLAMATION

Whereas, the Alford American Family Association was established in 1987 for the broad purposes of:

1. Collecting, recording, preserving, disseminating and perpetuating biographical data and historical information on Alford and their ancestors.
2. Educating members, particularly those of the younger generations, on Alford family history and how it relates to the history of our nation.
3. Furthering fellowship and camaraderie

within the living Alford family.

and, Whereas, the Association is now firmly established with over 300 members nationwide and,

Whereas, the Board of Directors of the said Association are desirous of recognizing the individuals most responsible for the growth and good organization, and,

Whereas, the Board of Directors are desirous of recognizing from time to time those individuals who have most contributed to furthering the broad purposes of the Association and,

Whereas, the Board of Directors has directed and by and with their authority, there is hereby established THE ALFORD AMERICAN FAMILY ASSOCIATION HALL OF FAME and,

Whereas, induction into the Hall of Fame may be made on an annual or other basis and may include one or more individuals and,

Whereas, this Association would not exist without the work of one individual over many years including the start up of the first Alford family newsletter in 1970, the Board of Directors is pleased to announce that the first inductee into the Hall of Fame is Mrs. Tressie E. Bowman.

Her outstanding achievements in promoting the purposes of the Alford American Family Association are exemplary and are in the highest and finest traditions of the ancient, proud, honorable and illustrious name of ALFORD.

I therefore set my hand and seal this 13th day of October in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ninety.

Lodwick H. Alford, AAFA President ❖

Tressie Bowman 0039

b. Jan 16 1899 & d. Oct 20 1992

Lived in Thurmont, MD

Family TH0585EN/JOH475EN

Attended 0 meeting(s).

During the 1970's she was the editor or publisher of the ALFORD FAMILY BULLETIN. Her support to later similar efforts contributed significantly to the success of the AAFA. She is a member of the AAFA Hall of Fame.