

MRS. GRACE (SNYDER) MARTIN

This article begins with a brief introduction to the two principal characters – including information about their parents and their lives before entering Lebanon Valley College. The three remaining segments follow the couple through their years at LVC, their time on the mission field, and their life after returning from Africa.

William Norman Martin (1896-1988)

William N. Martin was born in Rouzerville PA, the son of Harry Joseph and Molly M. (Sheldon) Martin. This hard-working and church-going Franklin County couple raised nine children. Mr. Martin worked for over thirty years in the blacksmith shop at the Geiser company works¹ before becoming the proprietor of a grocery store. His death occurred in 1923, several days after he fell over from a paralytic stroke into an unconscious state while waiting on a customer in his store. Like her husband, Mrs. Martin was a life-long resident of the Rouzerville vicinity.

Harry Martin had been raised in the United Brethren Church, and Mrs. Martin in the Methodist Episcopal denomination. As there was no United Brethren church in Rouzerville proper, they raised their nine children in that town's Methodist Episcopal Church, where some of their children and their descendants continued as Sunday School teachers, trustees, and in other leadership roles. William Martin joined the church at 14, graduated from the Washington Township High School in 1914, and enrolled in Lebanon Valley College – class of 1918.²

Grace Evangeline Snyder Martin (1896-1991)

Grace E. Snyder was the daughter of Rev. Josiah Franklin and Martha Caroline (Broy) Snyder. Rev. and Mrs. Snyder were raised in staunchly United Brethren homes in Maryland and West Virginia respectively and sought to instill those same virtues and values in their two children.³ It was the 1885 death of his saintly mother that led to the conversion and call to the ministry of Rev. Snyder. He graduated from the denomination's Shenandoah Institute in Dayton VA in 1890, entered the itinerant ministry, and (with a wife and two children) graduated from Union [now United] Seminary in Dayton OH in 1903.

As the daughter of an itinerant pastor, Grace Snyder spent her early years in a variety of locations. She was born in Martinsburg WV, was living in Red Lion

¹ The Geiser Manufacturing Company was founded in Waynesboro PA in 1869 by Peter and Daniel Geiser. It built farm implements and machinery under the brand name Peerless.

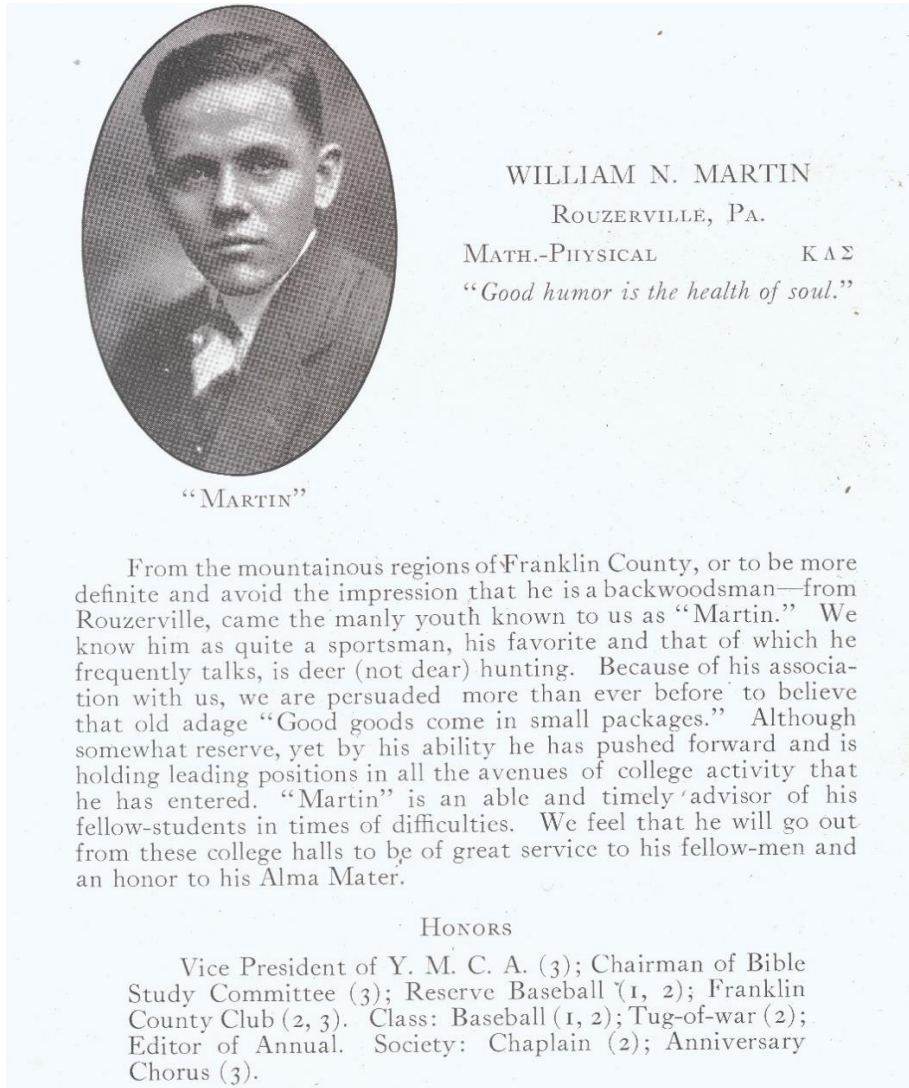
² William's younger brother Ralph E. (1902-1984) also graduated from LVC – class of 1921. He, too, met his future wife at LVC – Agnes F. Merchitis (1900-1974) from Minersville PA.

³ Grace was a first cousin to Margaret L. Broy Gregory, wife of United Brethren bishop David T. Gregory (1889-1956).

PA when her mother passed away in 1914, and was living in Boiling Springs PA the following year when she enrolled in Lebanon Valley College – class of 1919.

The Lebanon Valley College Years

In the Martins’ own words:⁴ “We met as students at Lebanon Valley College and there found new joy in the Scriptures as we discovered that Genesis 2:8 is a missionary text. We publicly dedicated our lives to the work at a Y.P.S.C.E.⁵ convention at an Eagles Mere Student Summer Conference.”



William Martin in the 1918 LVC yearbook

⁴ *The Evangel*, January 1921, page 9.

⁵ The Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavor. The cross-denominational “Christian Endeavor” was widely embraced within the former United Brethren and Evangelical denominations and played a major role in the spiritual development of their young people.



“Grace”

GRACE SNYDER
Boiling Springs, Pa.

MODERN-LANGUAGE

C.L.S.

“Her power of gentleness is irresistible.”

Grace takes life as it comes along, never worrying, never crying. She pictures to us a little lass, conscientiously taking an interest in the serious side of college life as well as the frivolous. She is always especially anxious to do her duty. During her Freshman year a strong friendship was found between herself and another classmate, so now Grace and Edna are called '19's twins. But this is not the only attachment she made, for rumor held that there was another in the literary field. Sure enough! Last year we were quite overjoyed when we learned that our English Literature was compiled by Snyder and Martin. We wonder whether another volume is under way.

Grace is an enthusiastic worker in Y. W. C. A. and from her interest in the Student Volunteer Band we can picture her far away in Africa inculcating the principles of right into the minds of mischievous little blacks. Well, Grace, it is a noble work and we wish you success in whatever field it may lead you.

HONORS

Class: Secretary (2); Associate Editor of Annual (3); Society: Corresponding Secretary (2); Y. W. C. A. Cabinet (3); Eagles Mere Delegates (1); Deutscher Verein (1); Student Volunteer Band, Secretary and Treasurer (2); Monitor (2).

Grace Snyder in the 1919 LVC yearbook

Nor were the Martins the only ones at Lebanon Valley College at the time who felt the call to the mission field – as indicated by the following article.⁶

⁶ *Lebanon Semi-Weekly News*, March 15, 1920, page 1.

LEBANON VALLEY STUDENTS AS MISSIONARIES

Announcement was made at Lebanon Valley College that sixteen students have become members of the student volunteer association and have pledged themselves to become foreign missionaries upon conclusion of their college courses.

It was also made known that one instructor and one student here and one 1919 graduate will depart for Africa as missionaries during the present year. They are Prof. W.N. Martin of Rouzerville, Franklin County, principal of the academy here, the Rev. A.H.M. Crim⁷ of Gerrardstown, W. Va., a member of the senior class, and Professor Martin's fiancée, Miss Grace Snyder of Boiling Springs, Cumberland County, now a teacher in the schools of Smithfield, W. Va.

The Martins' decision to serve in Sierra Leone was part of strong connection between that African nation and the college (and the entire UB denomination). A long line of its graduates had already served there – establishing schools, hospitals and churches. The earliest LVC graduates to serve as missionaries in Sierra Leone were another married couple who met at LVC, Mary Richards⁸ and Ira E. Albert,⁹ both of the class of 1897. After Ira died in 1902, the boys' mission school in Freetown was named the Albert Academy in his honor. Other LVC attendees who preceded the Martins as missionaries in Sierra include Jennie L. Light¹⁰ and James

⁷ Abram Harry Marshall Crim (1894-1972) was a member of the Virginia Conference. Prior to entering LVC, he had graduated from the UB's Shenandoah Valley Institute in Dayton VA. He served in Sierra Leone at Taiama 1920-23 and returned to the United States to earn a BD, ThM and ThD. He then became a Presbyterian pastor and served for 40 years (1929–1969) in Strasburg VA.

⁸ Mary Richards (1877-1973) was born and raised in Anville and says in a 1964 letter preserved in the college archives that LVC's influence was "pervasive, especially among the growing children of the town... I was a member of the Gleaner's Mission Band of the local church, which was periodically raising money to give children in Africa the opportunity to go to school. I sold walnut taffy which my mother made to help in the project. The College dormitories gave me an unfailing consumer resource. Students not only bought hundreds of my taffy patties, but a number became my longtime friends. I came to love the College and am sure it had an indefinable influence on my early years... I have always felt that LVC had a very large share in preparing me for and in determining my life work." Mary served in Freetown from 1899 until her husband Ira Albert died in 1902. She later married noted UB pastor Rev. Samuel S. Hough (1864-1944). The 1974 *Encyclopedia of World Methodism* includes articles on both Mary Richards Hough and Samuel Strickler Hough.

⁹ Ira E. Albert (1868-1902) was born in Lebanon County and served 1899-1902 as principal of the Academy at Freetown, which was later renamed Albert Academy in his honor, and as general superintendent of the UB work in Sierra Leone. He died while helping to pole a mission boat 60 miles up river from one station to another. The accident occurred at 2 AM while the group was traveling at night to avoid the heat of the day, and the darkness prevented others from executing a successful rescue.

¹⁰ Jennie Louisa Light (1866-1943) was born in Reading PA, the daughter of UB Rev. Ezekiel H. Light, and attended LVC in the 1880's. She married UB Rev. Luther O. Burtner (1858-1910) in 1888, and together they served as missionaries to Shaingay, Sierra Leone, 1892-98 and later to the Philippines 1902-04. Rev. Burtner was the son and grandson of UB ministers, a brother to two UB ministers, and a brother-in-law to yet another.

M. Leshner.¹¹ Graduates Raymond P. Daugherty,¹² class of 1897, served as principal at the Albert Academy for ten years, and Lena May Hoerner,¹³ class of 1910, taught school in Sierra Leone for five years.

Nor did the connection did stop with the Martins. While a complete listing of the relevant LVC alumni and their activities in Sierra Leone is beyond the scope of this article, no treatment of the subject would be complete without mention of Dr. Mabel Silver,¹⁴ class of 1925. She was the first female to earn a medical degree from the University of Maryland and served as a physician in Tiama, Sierra Leone, for 30 years – from 1932 to 1962.

And the connection also brought persons from Africa to LVC. Alfred Tennyson Sumner, class of 1902, the college's first student of color, had come from Sierra Leone. He returned to his native country where he served as a school principal and superintendent, and as a pastor. Today's Alfred Tennyson Sumner Scholarship is named in his honor. His son, the Hon. Doyle Sumner, attended LVC 1936-38 and later became Sierra Leone's Minister of Natural Resources.

The Martins commitment to Africa was well-known, as noted in the following article describing their wedding.¹⁵

COUPLE WED AT BOILING SPRINGS TO GO TO AFRICA

Interest In this city and throughout the Cumberland Valley, is centered on a wedding which occurred in Boiling Springs at noon today, when Miss Grace Evangeline Snyder, daughter of the Rev. Mr. J. F. Snyder, pastor of the United Brethren Church, became the bride of William N. Martin, former principal of Lebanon Valley Academy. The ceremony took place in the church, amid beautiful surroundings...

The Rev. Mr. Snyder, father of the bride, was the officiating clergyman, and immediately after the ceremony, a consecration service was

¹¹ James Morris Leshner (1857-1924) was born in Freeburg, Snyder County PA, and served in the East German and Allegheny Conferences. His conference obituary states that he attended LVC before entering the ministry in 1878. He and his wife, the former Eleanor Parks (1856-1922) of Middletown PA, served in Freetown 1883-1889. Records at LVC indicate that he also enrolled there in 1886 while home for a year's furlough.

¹² Rev. Raymond Philip Daugherty (1877-1933) was born in Lebanon PA, the son of UB Rev. Joseph B. Daugherty. He served as principal at the Albert Academy in Freetown from 1904 to 1914. It was there he met his wife, missionary Lulu Effie Landis (1883-1965), daughter of UB Rev. Josiah P. Landis.

¹³ Lena May Hoerner (1886-1975) was born in Boiling Springs PA, graduated from LVC in 1910, and taught in Sierra Leone at the Moyamba School for girls 1913-16 and 1918-20. Between her years of service in Sierra Leone, she returned home to take courses at Penn State 1916-17 and to teach high school at Annville 1917-18. Her later work included faculty positions at Fisk University and Otterbein College, and missionary service in Uruguay, Brazil and Peru. Miss Hoerner never married – and neither did her sister Jessie Emma Hoerner (1887-1975), who graduated from the Central Penn Business College and served in the UB mission office in Sierra Leone 1918-27.

¹⁴ Mabel I. Silver (1902-1972) was born in Baltimore and retired there after her service in Sierra Leone. She never married. A women's dormitory at LVC is named in her honor.

¹⁵ Harrisburg Evening News, June 23, 1920, page 4.

led by Bishop Howard, missionary bishop of the United Brethren Church, formally consecrating the young couple to mission service, preparatory to their coming work in Africa, where they will represent the church in the mission field...

Following the consecration service, a wedding reception was held at the Snyder home, and late this afternoon, Mr. and Mrs. Martin left for a brief wedding trip. On the return they will reside in Boiling Springs until August, when they sail for Africa. Mrs. Martin, who is known to many residents of this city, graduated with the class of 1919 from Lebanon Valley College. Mr. Martin, a member of the class of 1918, resigned his position as principal of Lebanon Valley Academy at the close of the school year.

The African Mission

While they clearly had solid spiritual depth and motivation, the Martins functioned primarily as educational missionaries. This had been their training. Following his graduation from LVC, William became principal of the Lebanon Valley Academy for two years while he earned his Master of Arts degree. Grace used her degree from LVC to teach for a year at Smithfield High School in Smithfield WV. During their time in Africa, the Martins kept in touch with their beloved LVC, as illustrated by the following 1923 paragraphs taken from a much larger account in the alumni section of the college's publication.¹⁶

In a letter written to Prof. S. H. Derickson, Prof. W. N. Martin of Albert Academy, Freetown, West Africa, describes vividly his experiences while trapping and killing two leopards. It follows:

"I caught the first one, which I let free, in a trap and Mr. Leopard traveled more than a quarter of a mile through dense bush and rocks. He charged roaring when he saw me and my boy,¹⁷ but the first shot (38-55 Winchester) cut the edge of his mouth and entered the third vertebrae and tore through and out high on the shoulder. The boy said 'he drank it.' I enclosed films, measurements and a note which I hope you receive. I stated that the hide which has been cared for properly to mount, will be started homeward about Christmas time with Miss Grace Renn¹⁸ of Shamokin and she will forward it to you. If you can have it mounted for the L.V. Museum¹⁹ it is presented with the compliments of Mr. and Mrs. Martin."

¹⁶ *The Crucible*, Spring 1923.

¹⁷ The "boy" referred to is not his son, but an African male who was working under him.

¹⁸ Mabel Grace Renn (1888-1929) would become the bride of the aforementioned Rev. Harry Crim. Her family was both staunchly United Brethren and staunchly patriotic – as her father was George Washington Renn and her uncle was UB Rev. Ulysses S. Grant Renn. Unfortunately, she died of complications following childbirth in 1929 while he was serving the Presbyterian Church in Strasburg, and she is buried in her native Shamokin.

¹⁹ There is a follow up to this stuffed and mounted leopard story on-line at digicom.lvc.edu/tropp under *Science on the Bunsen Burner: A History of the Sciences at the Valley*: "The College placed the leopard on display in the Tyrone Biological Museum for student and faculty observation. The preserved animal eventually earned the affectionate nicknames of 'Tyrone Tabby' and 'Lenny the Leopard.' As a prank, on March 31, 1939 some students stole the leopard. Annville police later found it deposited on the steps of the post office at the corner of Eighth and Chestnut Streets in

While caring for the usual general educational responsibilities associated with Albert Academy, William found time to pursue his scientific interests. In addition to keeping in touch with the science faculty at LVC, he periodically sent seeds to the U.S. Department of Agriculture describing their fruit and uses.²⁰



William and Grace in Africa, 1926, with children Paul and Grace

Life after Africa

When the Martins returned from Africa in 1926, they spoke at a Lebanon Valley College chapel service as noted in the college newspaper.²¹

W. N. Martin Speaks to the Student Body

Missionary, Wife and Children on Furlough Visit Their Alma Mater

A very interesting talk was given by Mr. and Mrs. W. N. Martin, in the Chapel, October 11th. Both are former graduates of this institution and are serving as missionaries to Africa, and are supported by Lebanon Valley College. They arrived in America, with their son, Paul, and daughter, Grace, September 3rd, last. Mr. Martin conducted the devotional exercises and gave a very interesting talk concerning Africa, its problems and difficulties. He spoke of the advances that Albert Academy is making.

Anville. Ever since this famous incident, the stuffed leopard became a target for student pranks. Lenny the Leopard continued to be stolen and later returned with souvenirs of his "travels" such as sunglasses, a bikini, and even a beret. The last time Lenny was seen was 1994. He has since been declared officially missing from Lebanon Valley College's campus."

²⁰See, for example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, *Inventory of Seeds and Plants Imported*, No. 72; Nos. 55569 to 55813. See specifically, Nos. 55792 to 55795.

²¹ *La Vie Collegienne*, Fall 1926

That same issue of the newspaper included a report on the meeting of one of the college's literary societies.

The fifty-sixth anniversary of Clionian Literary Society was observed, Friday evening, November 19, in Engle Conservatory. The society was indeed fortunate in obtaining the services of Mrs. Martin, who is in this country for a time, before returning to the mission field in Africa.

It appears that the Martins intended to return to the mission field, but for some reason that never happened.²² William taught biology at Lebanon Valley College for a year before beginning what would be 15 years of teaching at Wyomissing High School, near Reading PA, eventually becoming head of the science department. He was known as an effective and innovative educator. Even while raising three children, Grace joined in and is frequently listed as co-chaperoning various school events. One of the Martins most memorable educational ventures at Wyomissing High School involved taking students across the United States on "scamping" expeditions. The following article²³ describes the 1939 trip which included two of the Martin children – Grace and J. Paul – as participants. Son Joseph would have been 7 years old and apparently stayed behind.

Wyomissing 'Scampers' Leave On Trip
That Will Take Them Across Continent

Carlsbad Caverns, Death Valley, San Francisco's "Treasure Island," Yosemite National Park. Those are only a few stops on the third annual "scamping" expedition promoted by Professor William N. Martin, of the Wyomissing High School. Fourteen students from Wyomissing and Reading High Schools, plus Mrs. Martin, Miss Edna Dowland²⁴ and the leader, comprise the "scampers," who left Wyomissing this morning, heading for Harrisburg.

Their itinerary takes them through the Shenandoah Valley, across Tennessee and Alabama to the Gulf of Mexico at Mobile. Then westward via New Orleans through Louisiana to Shreveport, and across Texas to the Carlsbad Cavern, New Mexico. From there they will travel to El Paso and Juarez, Mexico, northward to Santa Fe, to the Grand Canyon, Painted Desert, Petrified Forest, and Boulder Dam. The sight-seers will then head for California by way of Las Vegas and Death Valley, to Los Angeles. After spending some time at Hollywood, Long Beach, they'll visit Sequoia and Yosemite Parks and then the World's Fair at San Francisco. Visits along the coast will lead them to Seattle, east to Glacier and Yellowstone and a week at Rosebud Ranch, Kirby, Montana.

After tasting ranch life, they will move eastward again across the Bad Lands and Minnesota, to Duluth, from where they'll cross Wisconsin

²² Family tradition has it that the return did not take place because William had experienced some difficulty with malaria during their stay in Africa.

²³ *Reading Times*, June 21, 1939, page 19.

²⁴ A native of Chester County PA, Miss Edna Roselean Dowland (1906-1988) was a faculty colleague of William Martin in the Wyomissing School District for several years. She later worked for the Girls Scouts and, beginning in 1953, was on the faculty in the education department at West Chester State College. In 1988 she was described as "a retired lifetime educator" and awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters by Lebanon Valley College – which connection is explained on the following page.

and Michigan to Sault Saint Marie. The last lap on the trip will start in Detroit, go east through Ontario to Niagara Falls and back to the starting point. Hotels will be avoided on the tour. All meals will be prepared by the campers themselves. Martin, the leader, has been active in this sort of youth work for 20 years. At one time he and his wife were in West Africa, conducting a native teachers' training school.

"Scamping" is defined by Martin as school, travel and camping in one. Last year's trip, which covered the same route as this year's, was a 12,000-mile jaunt. In 1937 the scampers visited the New England States and Quebec. The route this year was planned by the young people in the party.

William would lead two more summer "scamping" expeditions at Wyomissing before moving in a different direction – which included a separation from Grace, an EdD from Columbia University in 1944, and, beginning in 1951, seventeen years as a biology professor at East Stroudsburg State College. He maintained connections with his former Wyomissing colleague Miss Edna Dowland, and the two of them married in 1958. The new couple then assumed an active role in the support of Lebanon Valley College – in 1985, William was named alumnus of the year; in 1987, the couple donated 140 acres²⁵ to the college for use as an environmental studies park; in addition, a Dowland-Martin Scholarship²⁶ was established and a tree was planted on campus in William's memory. While Grace's position as an honored alumna and former missionary appears to have faded into the background, she continued to remember her alma mater – as she is listed, for example, as a donor to the 1972-73 *Fund for Fulfillment* campaign.²⁷

Summary: The Life and Ministry of Grace (Snyder) Martin²⁸

Grace had a passion for sharing the Gospel in word and deed. She was the first president²⁹ of the Student Volunteer Movement at Lebanon Valley College from which missionaries went out all across the world. The **unexpected disruption** created in the life of Mrs. Martin by the separation from her husband did not prevent her from continuing to fulfill her perceived calling in life.

²⁵ Unfortunately, this project never materialized. The site, which was near Gettysburg, was deemed to be too far removed from the campus, and the property was sold.

²⁶ LVC reports [in 2/3/2021 email from the Director of Advancement Operations] that, "As an endowed scholarship, it will continue to be awarded in perpetuity to LVC students who demonstrate financial need and are involved in campus, community, and/or church activities."

²⁷ Lebanon Valley College, *Report of the President 1972-73*, page 22

²⁸ Much of the personal information in this section was obtained from emails and phone calls with Grace's granddaughter Diane (Martin) Logan of Whispering Pines NC. Children of Grace's son John Paul, Diane and her brother John were Grace's only grandchildren. As they grew up in Wyomissing, they were able to spend much time with their grandmother. In Diane's words, "I believe my grandmother must have suffered so much over the deeds of my grandfather, however her complete faith in the Lord saw her through any dark days. She was truly a courageous woman of faith."

²⁹ Lebanon Valley College, 1929 *Quittapahilla*, page 170.

She was a nurturing mother. John Paul (1921-2007), who was born in Sierra Leone, attended Gettysburg College, graduated from Dickinson Law School and became an attorney. Grace Evangeline (1922-2011), also born in Sierra Leone, attended Duke University, graduated from Abington Memorial Hospital and worked in the nursing field for 42 years – including serving as a Cadet Nurse for the US Army in WWII. Joseph H. (1931-2003), born in Pennsylvania, graduated from Syracuse University and became a bank manager. A fourth child, William Jr., was born in 1930 and lived for only 23 days.

She was a teacher. While she never returned to the classroom as a vocation, she taught her children and grandchildren by example. Her grandchildren remember their visits fondly, knowing that they were raised in a Christian home where church participation was important because of the model set by their grandmother.

She was a church worker – both in the local church and beyond. Grace was the first president of the Council of United Church Women of Reading and a director of the YWCA of Reading.³⁰ And, of course, she was an active member of the Women’s Missionary Society.

She was a gracious host, especially to Albert Academy graduates visiting the United States – who were always invited in for home-cooked African food and talk about Albert Academy. She also kept in touch with former missionaries – particularly the aforementioned Hoerner sisters

Life’s **unexpected disruptions** never prevented Grace from quoting what her grandchildren remember being her signature verse of scripture: “All thing work together for good to them that love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.” – Romans 8:28

³⁰ Obituary. *Reading Eagle*, September 16, 1991.