

# Mary Magdalene Carpenter

Mary Magdalene Carpenter was the first Dean of Women at Southwestern Christian College (SwCC), having been appointed in 1959 and she served with distinction, even with great financial sacrifice. She served at the job she was assigned, demonstrating through her lifestyle to students on campus, the meaning of Christian integrity, honor and dedication to the worthy cause of Christian Education.



Those of us, who were privileged to get to know her, loved her and she will always be in our hearts because she truly is a stone beneath our feet. The spirit of Sister Carpenter lives on here on the campus of SwCC through the dedicated work of her granddaughter, Sister Peggy Autry.

The story of her life, written by Sister Mary, begins with the loss of her husband, and reads as follows.

"My dear husband died June 11, 1942. I was terribly depressed, but then came my faithful mother who had already laid for me the "behind the scene" structural work.

She helped me with my three small children: Dorothy, Mary and Clarence. Also, many other friends have assisted us in many ways. Mother and others who were interested in helping me realize my fondest hope, which was to better prepare myself to serve God for mankind, persuaded me to return to school, in spite of the dark future that seemed to confront me.

I registered at the Nashville Christian Institute in 1942, finding employment in the homes of people who were both friends and employers. Somehow, with the help of the Almighty God, we managed to keep ahead of debts and responsibilities. I graduated in 1945 and with the help of the Union Avenue church of Christ, my tuition at Tennessee A & I was paid for for four years. I returned to Nashville Christian Institute and taught for one year."

Sister Carpenter served 17 years as the Dean of Women (1950-1967) at SwCC. She served under the direction of three presidents and four deans. She taught psychology, history and education. She was also the college librarian for ten years, supervisor of the work program, secretary to the Bowser Memorial Scholarship Fund and founder of the Dorcas Club.

In regards to the naming of the women's dormitory, she stated, "In November 1971, I was flown to SwCC to give a dedication speech for the new dormitory lounge. As I sat on the stage, I noticed the speaker, Sister Patricia Evans, was beginning to read a list of my accomplishments. At the conclusion, a portrait of me was unveiled and they dedicated the new dormitory as the Mary Carpenter Hall." It was a happy day and stunning tribute when the new dorm for young women at SwCC was named for Mary Magdalene Carpenter. She was a champion for Christian education up until her passing in 1974.

Sister Carpenter's life is a real success story for her and her work, a testimony for the Lord.

