

Mrs. McDuffie Recalls Her White House Days

ATLANTA INQUIRER
07 JULY 1962



SHARE THE PAST - Shown Above-----chatting with Jondelle Johnson about her reunion with Eleanor Roosevelt during a recent visit to Atlanta-is Elizabeth McDuffie.

By Jondelle Johnson

Elizabeth "Lizzie" McDuffie, a grand old lady, nearly 82 years old has lived a life that few people can match. Born in Covington, Ga. she was reared in Atlanta. Lizzie was married to Irving McDuffie who died January 30, 1946.

Irving McDuffie began earning a livelihood as a barber at the Herndon Barber Shop. Later he was hired as personal valet to the late President Roosevelt at Warm Springs, Ga. In this capacity he also served as barber.

Meanwhile, Lizzie was working for one of Atlanta's oldest families, the Inmans. She left their employ after many years to join her husband as personal maid to the Roosevelts.

This happy association continued for over 30 years. The couple worked for the family before Roosevelt became governor of New York, at Hyde Park, also Albany, New York, when he was governor and for his entire tenure as president of the United States.

Lizzie has many fond memories of her days at the White House and took care of the Roosevelt children and later the grandchildren. Her residence is

(Photo by Bob Johnson) virtually a museum full of mementos of her experiences--- letters- cards- numerous scrapbooks- gifts and newspaper clippings.

It is an education in itself to visit her home and share these journeys into the past. While at the White House she met royalty, dignitaries and officials from all parts of the world.

There are autographed pictures of Shirley Temple, Marian Anderson, Louise Beavers, Mattiilda Dobbs and the Roosevelt clan, among many others.

A lover of dramatics since childhood, Lizzie used to act and travel with church organi-

zations staging religious plays. She also directed children's plays and studied elocution for a short period.

While at the White House she became known for her acting among the staff and often entertained the president and his wife with her recitations.

Therefore, in 1937, when the hunt was on for talent to take roles in the world famous movie "Gone With The Wind" Lizzie was approached for the

part of Mammy.

She had five screen tests and was considered suitable for the part because of having been reared in Atlanta, the locale of the movie, and because of her years of working as a maid.

After the news was released to the press, she was swamped with telegrams of well wishes. These are all preserved in a scrapbook today. However she later received work that the producers would seek an actress with more experience.

During the presidential elections, she took the stump and campaigned for Roosevelt untiringly. An exquisite vase now graces her living room that was given her by the Ohio State Democratic Committee during the first campaign she worked in for the President.

The McDuffies were also pushing people of their race at every opportunity. They are said to be responsible for two talented Negro artists---Mme. Lillian Evans and Etta Moten--appearing at the White House.

Strong of character and endowed with a wonderful personality, Lizzie attended Morris Brown College and is a Past Worthy Matron of the Gate City Chapter of the Eastern Stars.

She holds membership at the Liberty Baptist Church. Her closest relative in Atlanta is a sister, Leona Wofford.

Those people who lived during the Roosevelt era and the younger segment of the populace who studied his adminis-

tration will gain untold insight into the man who has had much to do with our destiny by talking to Elizabeth McDuffie and browsing through the countless scrapbooks and mementos in her possession.