

Memorial Services: Saturday, July 28, 2007, 11:00 AM
West Funeral Home (601- 442-3641)
409 M.L.King Drive (formerly Pine Street)
Natchez, Mississippi 39120-3362

- University of Michigan: (to-be-announced)
- Yale University (to-be-announced)

Rhetaugh Etheldra Graves Dumas, a native of Natchez, Mississippi, was born on the eve of America's *Great Depression*. In the arc of a long professional life, Dr. Dumas surmounted numerous challenges and left an indelible mark in the health care system of the United States.

Dr. Dumas made significant and lasting contributions to nursing and the nation as a nursing scholar, administrator, and outstanding leader and mentor with a career that has included pioneering positions in government, academia and academic medical center administration.

She was the first woman and the first nurse to serve as deputy director of the *National Institute of Mental Health* and was the first African American woman to serve as dean at the *University of Michigan*. She was one of 36 distinguished nurses who were Charter Fellows of the *American Academy of Nursing* when it was established in 1973, and from 1987-1989, Dr. Dumas was president of the *American Academy of Nursing*.

In 1979, *Health and Human Services Secretary* Patricia Roberts Harris appointed Dr. Dumas as deputy director of *The National Institute of Mental Health*, the lead Federal agency for research on mental and behavioral

Dr. Rhetaugh Graves Dumas was born in Natchez, Mississippi, on November 26, 1928. She died in Houston, Texas, on July 22, 2007, aged 78.

Sources:

The University of Michigan School of Nursing
The American Academy of Nursing

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P.O. Box 2632
New York, NY 10185-2632

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disorders. Later, President Bill Clinton appointed her to his *National Advisory Commission on Bioethics*. The Commission focused on protection of the rights and welfare of human research subjects and issues in the management and use of genetic information. As part of its work, the commission considered the scientific, legal and ethical implications of patenting human genes.

In her clinical research, Dr. Dumas made outstanding contributions as a clinical nurse researcher while drawing on her previous experiences as a psychiatric nurse and gynecological surgical nurse. She pioneered the first evidence-based-outcomes study in clinical nursing research entitled, "The Effect of Nursing Care on Postoperative Vomiting." This landmark study is an example of the role that research can play in enhancing the art and science of nursing care, and in documenting the positive role of nursing for facilitating the comfort and well-being of patients.

Bringing her keen interest in research to the *National Institute of Mental Health*, in 1972, Dr. Dumas became, in seven short years, the first woman and first ethnic minority to hold the agency's position of Deputy Director. While there, she played a major role in urging that their professional training meet

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the needs of the *un-served* and *under-served*. In the 1980's through her position on the *National Institutes of Health* advisory council, she played a leadership role in integrating nursing research into the NIH. In the 1990's, as a Fellow of the *Carl Jung Institute* in Zurich, Switzerland, she utilized Jung's insights in understanding gender and race as key variables to synthesize her personal experiences into a fresh statement about the dimensions of effective leadership.

As a nursing leader, Dr. Dumas' influence has been felt in education and nursing organizations. Dr. Dumas has impacted the lives of many nurses in her roles as nursing instructor; Assistant Professor; tenured Associate Professor at *Yale University*; Dean and Professor at the *University of Michigan*; and Vice Provost of Health Affairs at the *University of Michigan*. A dedicated and gifted teacher, mentor and academic administrator, Dr. Dumas has positively changed the lives of hundreds of nurses who are becoming the next generation of her thoughtful legacy.

In 1951, Dr. Dumas received her Bachelor's degree in Nursing from *Dillard University* and launched her career as a substitute teacher in the

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Natchez, Mississippi Separate Public School District. In the 1950's, she combined nursing and teaching in the public schools long before it was deemed innovative.

From 1957-1961, she was an instructor at *Dillard University*. In 1961, she received a Master's Degree in Psychiatric Nursing from *Yale University*. In 1962, she joined the faculty of Yale University, where she rose through the ranks to associate professor and chair of psychiatric nursing in the *Yale University School of Nursing*.

From 1972-1981, she held several leadership positions at the *National Institute of Mental Health*, in Rockville, Maryland.

In 1981, Dr. Dumas joined the *University of Michigan* faculty as professor of nursing and dean of the *School of Nursing*. She remained dean until 1994, when she was named vice provost for health affairs and the *Lucille Cole Professor of Nursing*.

As dean of the *School of Nursing*, Professor Dumas was an ardent advocate of excellence in nursing research and scholarship as a means of advancing the discipline of nursing. She provided a powerful vision of nursing

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and demonstrated considerable personal and professional influence in many spheres. A renowned national and international scholar in the area of psychiatric nursing, Professor Dumas conducted extensive externally-funded research on clinical experiences in nursing practice and authored many journal articles and book chapters.

Professor Dumas received numerous honorary doctoral degrees, including those from *Yale University; Simmons College; the University of Cincinnati; Dillard University; and the University of San Diego.*

In 1994, the *University of Michigan* established *The Rhetaugh Graves Dumas Professorship in Nursing*, the first fully endowed (\$1.2 million) professorship for the *School of Nursing*. Previously, in 1989, *Yale University* established an endowed chair in her name.

At the time of her death, Dr. Dumas had been writing a book which she had not completed; in her personal life, Dr. Dumas enjoyed music—particularly opera; traveling, and entertaining friends.

She is survived by a daughter, Adrienne Josephine Dumas, of Houston, TX; brothers, Wade H. Graves, of Houston, TX; and Norman Bell, of Hartford,

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CT; previously, she was married to the late Dr. Albert W. Dumas, Jr., of
Natchez, MS., 1950-1959.

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