

Soul

By Amy Hodges

Hope. Soul. Perseverance. These are only three of the many prominent qualities of Johnnie Davis. Her soul shines through the most though. It showed even when situations were tough. Even when it seemed like she couldn't follow her dreams, she kept trying.

In school, Mrs. Davis went to an all-black school that she lived far away from, so she couldn't walk each day, but only the all-white schools got buses. So during high school, she had to earn enough money by watching the local doctor's children just to ride the Greyhound bus everyday. The family was white. Mrs. Davis could get into the restaurants that were against African Americans because she was with the kids. "I saw the way wealthy people lived," she said while retelling the story, "and I thought if I got an education, I could live how they did." She didn't know it was because of the color of her skin, not because of her money.

And so it was set. Johnnie Davis decided to get the best education she could, so that she could live how the doctor and his children lived. Mrs. Davis never let things get in the way of her education during school. She wouldn't date any men that didn't have goals. "First things first. I've got the rest of my life to play games," she said. A lot of her friends in school were discouraged by the racism and isolation going on, and eventually dropped out. "You give up a lot to get to where you want—you have to choose what's important," she tells about the sacrifices she had to make in order to pursuit her dreams.

Also in college, she met her future husband, Theodore Davis. He was a brilliant student studying to be an electrical engineer. Mr. Davis was also very dedicated to his education. One year after college, they got married. The Davises had three sons; all received full scholarships to college. Mr. And Mrs. Davis told their sons, "You are expected to go to college. If you choose not to, you'd better find a place to sleep because you're not living with us."

Mrs. Davis worked in the St. Vrain Valley School District as a kindergarten teacher for 23 years. She liked working with kids because they were honest. "Kids see you as a person. They tell you if they like you or not," she said.

Mrs. Davis went through a lot in her life, and she was her own influence. "Do the best you can and what anybody else says doesn't matter," she told our class. Mrs. Davis glows with life, spunk, and soul. She clearly doesn't want to be judged because of her race, and she doesn't let that change who she is. She is true to herself and believes that she can do whatever she wants. "Don't let anybody else define who you are and what you can do," she said. "That's for *you* to define."