

# Alma Louise Randolph (1957- )

By Jerry Long  
c.2026



Alma L. Randolph



**From NKAAs, Notable Kentucky African Americans Database:**



Randolph, Alma L.  
(born: 1957)

Born in Beaver Dam, KY, Alma Randolph was the first African American woman elected to the Beaver Dam City Council (1980) and the first African American to hold office in Ohio County, KY. She is also a gospel singer who performs locally and nationally.

In 1993, she founded the *Alma Randolph Charitable Foundation*, which buys school supplies and back-to-school clothing for disadvantaged children. She is the Human Rights/Community Relations Specialist for Owensboro. In 2007 she was appointed to the state *Human Rights Commission* by then Governor Ernie Fletcher.

For more see KET's "*Connections with Renee Shaw*" - #308: Alma Randolph; and Marlys Mason, "Alma Randolph Charitable Foundation recognized for impact on community's disadvantaged," *The Owensboro Times*, 9/12/2019.



**Kentucky Commission on Human Rights – Hall of Fame:**



Alma L. Randolph was elected as Beaver Dam City Commissioner when she was just 24 years old. She was the first woman and the first African American to hold elected office in Ohio County, Kentucky. Also, she was inducted among the first three women, and the first African-American admitted to the Owensboro Rotary Club.

Since 2011, Alma has owned Higher Ground Consulting, LLC a business designed to work with employers on providing in- house EEO Diversity & Sensitivity training for management and non-management staff. This specialized training enables employers to create an environment free of discrimination. Higher Ground Consulting, LLC is a certified Minority Female Owned Business.

Since the inception of the Alma Randolph Charitable Foundation in 1993, the foundation has raised more than \$1.2 million dollars (net) and provided clothing and shoes for more than 16,400 disadvantaged children. The Alma Randolph Charitable Foundation is a non-profit organization, and does not receive any local, state or federal government funding; and is not a United Way funded agency. The ARCF has no paid staff.

In 2016, the ARCF expanded the mission to include upgrading the living conditions of disadvantaged families through the foundation's HUTS Project. Twenty-two disadvantaged families have been blessed with new furniture and household items.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 4 November 1981, p.3C:**

.... Those elected to the six-seat Beaver Dam city council were Charles Wayne Patton, Jerrel W. Shephard, Bob Shoopman, Keith T. Dale, Alma L. Randolph and John A. Burden....



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 3 April 1985, pp.1A & 10A:**

## **Paving her own road to success**

Reaching Beaver Dam council took determination for Alma Randolph

By Gary Karr, Messenger -Inquirer

When Alma Randolph was 3 years old, her father died of liver cancer. Alone, with only minimal governmental assistance, her mother, Louise Randolph, raised Miss Randolph and her three brothers.

We never saw hungry days, but as a child going to school, there were other kids who had a lot more than I did," said the 28- year-old Beaver Dam City Councilwoman. "I never had a new dress on my back until I was 10, and then it was because someone in the church made it for me."

Miss Randolph knows now that her mother's struggle wasn't easy. "It wasn't until 12 years after my father's death that my mother got his black-lung benefits and his Social Security," she said.

When Miss Randolph was 15, her mother got a job cleaning offices in Beaver Dam, the family would all pitch in and help. "One week I would get the check, the next week my older brother would get the check. We got to buy our school supplies and things that way," she said.

In December 1980, Miss Randolph decided to run for the city council, despite the advice of some people who told her she shouldn't. Beaver Dam had never had a female council member, and Ohio County had never had a black in any political office, they said.

The decision to run for the council was not an easy one to make, Miss Randolph said. "I had been involved in some church activities before, but never in any political office. And I had three things supposedly going against me: I was young, I was : a woman and I was black," she said.

Miss Randolph, who describes herself as cautious, defied the advice of those who told her not to run. "I wanted the opportunity to serve the community," she said.

The next year, at the age of 24, she was elected to the council, finishing fourth in a field of eight.

In 1983, she finished second in a field of six. This year, she's assured of winning again, since there are only six people running for the six-seat council. She serves on the council part time, besides her duties as an administrative assistant at Nestaway, where she has worked for nine years since her graduation from Owensboro Business College.

Miss Randolph's council post has led to her nomination for inclusion in the 1985 edition of "Who's Who Among Black Americans." Though final selections haven't been made for the book, 99 percent of those nominated eventually are included, according to Ann Wolk Krouse, editor of the publication.

Miss Randolph attributes much of her success to her mother and her faith in God. "There have been many other people who have encouraged me. But my mother and God are the main ones, with him first. There have been so many opportunities he has opened to me," she said.

Miss Randolph said she is proud of the fact that her race, sex and age have had little effect on her election victories.

"When I was first elected, there were only 15 blacks in the city of Beaver Dam. I guess this proves that my support didn't come from just blacks, because I got 568 votes. I didn't look to represent blacks, anyway. I represent the city of Beaver Dam," she said. Reception in both the community and on the council has been good from "day one" she said.

"When I went door-to-door, I only got two cool receptions, and none of them were color-related. One was from an elderly woman who probably just didn't like people knocking " on her door anyway," Miss Randolph said.

Her race also has little affect her outlook on life, she said. "The church we attended was interracial, but the only black children were my brothers and me. When I went to school, I was always the only black in my class. But I don't see color. For me, it's never been a problem. I can count on one hand the times I felt I was resented for the color of my skin," said Miss Randolph.

Shortly before Miss Randolph took office, Beaver Dam annexed a section near the city where about 150 blacks lived. Beaver Dam now has about 170 of Ohio County's 200 black residents.

In 1982, Miss Randolph served as a community liason officer between the city and the federal department of Housing and Urban Development when HUD gave the city a housing grant to refurbish and rebuild homes in the southern part of Beaver Dam.

Ohio County officials who work with Miss Randolph praise her abilities. "I think (her election) shows that everyone can be judged on qualifications. She's very capable. It's something to be proud of," said Ohio Judge-executive C.B. Embry Jr.

Beaver Dam Mayor David Taylor, who was elected in 1981 along with Miss Randolph, said "She is a pleasure to work with. She's always been very cooperative."

Miss Randolph said some people have asked her to run for countywide office, but she doesn't believe she's ready. "I've considered it, but I'm not ready for it yet. If I run for county office, I want to have at least eight years of council experience," she said.

The decision to run for higher office would be made in her typical fashion, she says: slow and methodical. "I weigh all the possible avenues before I decide. Politically and personally, that's the way I think," she said.

Miss Randolph said this might be the reason she is single at an age when most of her friends are married. "I've been engaged twice, but it wasn't going to work out," she said. "Anyway, there aren't a whole lot of single men available around here," she adds, laughing.

Miss Randolph, the daughter of a minister, has always lived in Beaver Dam, despite feeling the urge sometimes to move to a bigger city.

"My roots are here and I feel a sense of obligation because of my position on the council." she said.

Miss Randolph admits that the city council is often devoid of controversy, and that keeps her out of the limelight. Still, she said she enjoys being in the leadership position.

"I guess I like helping people. When I can help get some people some food, or something like that, I feel good. That's what I like about my job," she said.



**Messenger-, Inquirer, Owensboro KY, Wednesday, 29 April 1987, p.1C:**

## Beaver Dam woman gets human relations job

By Catherine Behan, Messenger-Inquirer

Alma L. Randolph, Beaver Dam city councilwoman, has accepted job as executive director of the Owensboro Human Relations Commission.

Miss Randolph, 30, was offered position after interviewing with the commission at a special meeting Tuesday.

She will replace Charles Leachman, who resigned to take a job with the state's Administrative Office of the Courts. His last day is Thursday.

Miss Randolph is the first woman on Beaver Dam's City Council and the first black to hold public office in Ohio County. She plans to move to Owensboro soon, she said, and will have to resign from her third term on the council.

Miss Randolph said she applied for the director's job "because I am a people person. I desired for some time to have a position like this."

She said she thought her experience working for city government would help her r work with city officials here.

"I think that the job of the Human Relations Commission is to bring unity into the community, regardless of what the problems might be," she said.

She said she also wants to work with women's organizations about women's issues.

The commission is designed to promote better relations in the community and to investigate complaints of discrimination. Leachman has said the agency's strength has been in making people aware of discrimination, supporting people who have been wronged or helping them seek remedies for their problems.

The commission met in closed session to interview two finalists. Leachman said he would not release the name of the second finalist, also a woman. A third finalist – another woman – dropped her name from the list before the meeting.

Harold Nelson, chairman of the panel, said 23 people applied for the position.

Leachman said the board liked Miss Randolph's experience as a personnel coordinator with Lincoln Service Corp.

He said the panel also liked her work as a member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Career Development Association, and with the H.L. Neblett Community Center as special program coordinator.

In 1985, she was named to Who's Who Among Black Americans. In high school, she was named in Who's Who Among American High School Students.

She said she would set a date to start in her new job today.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Thursday, 3 September 1987, pp.1D & 2D:**



## Director lends ear to victims of discrimination

By Alan Chitlik and Catherine Behan, Messenger-Inquirer



Alma Randolph, executive director of the Owensboro Human Relations Committee, said she doesn't think of her position as a 9-to-5 job. "There are said cases that it's very hard for me to leave at the door."

Someone has to take responsibility when a problem needs solving, and Alma Randolph thinks it might as well be her.

"Problems are going to remain until you treat them," she said.

As executive director of the Owensboro Human Relations Committee, Ms. Randolph is in charge of the office that fields complaints from people who think they have been victims of discrimination.

"An agency like this is very important to a city or a state simply because those individuals who have been discriminated against or wronged need to know there's someone they can go to.

"There are so many areas that individuals can be discriminated against. Some are protected by law, some are not," she said.

She has had 49 cases since she took the job in May – fewer than 10 were race-related – and 15 of them have been sent on to the state as possible violations of the law. The others were dealt with locally or there was nothing the commission could do.

But frequently when people call, they are looking for a sympathetic ear. Ms. Randolph tries to provide that, too.

"I've never turned a deaf ear and I never intend to," she said.

She said she doesn't think of her position as a 9-to-5 job. "There are cases that it's very hard for me to leave at the door on the way out.

"It's fulfilling when you've been instrumental in helping them solve a problem," she said. "I enjoy being involved with people."

She said when she took the job in May she has found fewer cases of racial discrimination than she expected, but more cases of sex and age discrimination.

She said several times women have been harassed at work by men making sexist comments who didn't know they were doing anything illegal. "A lot of people feel like if they are not touching in an unacceptable manner, it's not sexual harassment," she said.

But once the law is explained to them, the men tend to quit the harassment, she said.

She said sometimes people between the ages of 40 and 70 are given extra responsibility as an attempt to pressure them into retiring. It is illegal to discriminate against people of that age in employment.

In another recent case, a black woman had everything set up to rent an apartment over the phone except she had to see it and finally approve it.

When she got to the apartment, the renter said, "Well, we're thinking about selling it rather than renting it," Ms. Randolph said.

The person brought the incident to the attention of the Human Relations Commission and after the commission contacted the landlord, the woman now lives in that apartment.

Ms. Randolph said people who are the subjects of complaints are surprisingly cooperative most of the time.

"I've only had one person say to me, 'Let them take their best shot, if they want to sue me or whatever,' and I think that's pretty good," she said.

She grew up in Beaver Dam and said she didn't know exactly what she wanted to do with her life, just that she wanted to be a "successful, career-oriented professional woman."

"As a child growing up, I never experienced the problem of racism. Maybe I was just fortunate," she said.

But she did experience living on Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

Her father, a minister, died of cancer leaving four children, including Alma, 3, and her youngest brother, then 7 months old. The family then lived on federal assistance.

But she said they also got a lot extra from God.

Both her parents, but especially her mother, emphasized God would provide what she needed. It wasn't until Ms. Randolph was 15 years old that her mother was able to go off AFDC.

But though feeding Ms. Randolph and her three brothers was difficult on assistance, the family was never hungry or went without necessities. "I've heard my mother say over and over that the food multiplied," she said.

Ms. Randolph later attended the Owensboro Business College, now the Owensboro Junior College of Business. Then she got a job at Nestaway Corp. She worked her way from stenographer at the business, which makes dishwasher racks, to administrative assistant.

At the urging of her friends and family, she ran for the Beaver Dam City Council in 1980 when she was 24.

It was usual for someone young or black or female to run for office, but a candidate who was all three was unheard of.

"The negatives that other people saw, I viewed those things as positive," she said.

She won her seat on the council as the fourth highest vote-getter out of eight candidates. She became the first black elected to a public office in the county and the first woman to run.

She said the number of blacks in Beaver Dam was small and she got a lot of support from whites. "I've never thought I was elected because I'm black," she said.

For a time, she was the only black person holding a city or county office in Daviess, Hancock, Ohio, Muhlenburg and McLean counties.

She continued on the council, winning re-election twice, but when she read about Charles Leachman resigning as executive director of the Owensboro commission, she decided to apply.

Harold Nelson, who was chairman of the commission when Ms. Randolph was hired, said 26 people applied and 14 were interviewed for the position.

He said what stood out about Ms. Randolph was "her professionalism and the way she carries herself." "

She has a lot of common sense and that's what it takes in this day and time," he said. Ms. Randolph says what she has earned has come through the strength of God.

"I was taught all of my life we are nothing without Christ," she said. "I rely on him totally for decisions I have to make. I know if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be where I am today.'

She said she learned early that when she couldn't find solutions for problems, she could pray and then be able to see a solution.

"There's been times when I said, "Wow, how did this happen?' and I stop and I think, it's been God that has done that," she said.

Ms. Randolph sings to express her love for God, and is often booked with requests to participate in weddings, church services or special events.

"I enjoy it," she said. "It's my favorite pastime because it sort of gives me a feeling that I'm doing something for God and for people."

She started singing when she was 3, she said, the same year her father died.

This past Sunday, she sang at the final service of the Hartford Church of God of Prophecy in the church her father built as minister in 1959. The church, of which she is still an active member, is moving into a new building this Sunday.

In November 1985 and September 1986, that link between her relationship with Christ and her success prompted the "700 Club" to do a feature on Ms. Randolph.

A friend wrote in suggesting she be interviewed, and a crew came out for a five-hour conversation in August 1985. The story talked about how a young black woman could earn a seat in public office and how her faith keeps her going.

After it was on television, several organizations called to have her speak to groups of blacks about how they could be in politics. And several men called to find out if the pretty woman might be willing to spend some time with them, she said with a laugh.

She might go talk to one of those political groups, but she just gets a chuckle out of the calls from men.

Nelson said Ms. Randolph has a clear understanding that what's right is right and what's wrong is wrong.

"Anyone who talks to her is going to be comfortable," he said. "I think her religious background has a lot to do with that."



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro. KY, Wednesday, 18 January 1989, p.1C:**

### **Randolph quits as Human Relations head**

By Dan Heckel, Messenger-Inquirer



Alma Randolph

Alma Randolph, who accepted the job as executive director of the Owensboro Human Relations Commission less than two years ago, has resigned from the post to take a new job with the city.

Ms. Randolph said she mailed her letter of resignation Friday to the human relations board, the same day she was offered the job as an employee and community relations specialist with the city.

"This is definitely a step up for me," Ms. Randolph said. "It offers me greater career opportunities."

Ms. Randolph, 32, will be responsible for the city employees' newsletter, the United Way campaign and training and educational programs. She'll work with equal opportunity employment, affirmative action and Community Development Block Grant compliance. The job begins Feb. 6.

She'll also represent the city at some community functions, and will coordinate special events, such as the employee picnic and Christmas party. She said this job will eventually allow her to go into personnel work on a much broader professional basis.

City Manager Max Rhoads said the city decided it needed someone who could communicate with the employees, and Ms. Randolph scored highest on the public-service exam. "I think she'll do an excellent job," he said.

Mayor David Adkisson said the job was created along with two other jobs in the personnel department. A health specialist and insurance specialist are the positions being added, he said.

Neither Rhoads nor Adkisson knew what Ms. Randolph's salary would be, and city Personnel Director Steve Loyal could not be reached.

Ms. Randolph worked in personnel for 11 years at the Nestaway Division of Axia in Beaver Dam, and one year at Lincoln Service Corp. before becoming executive director of the Human Relations Commission in May 1987.

She said she resigned with mixed emotions. "There is much to be accomplished in human relations, but I believe the accomplishments we made under my administration made a difference," she said.

Judy Kapelsohn, chairwoman of the commission board, said the board will begin the process of replacing Ms. Randolph at a meeting tonight. There's no one in mind for the job yet, Kapelsohn said.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 28 January 1991, pp.1C & 2C:**

## **Area singer to hit the road**

Alma Randolph's  
1st album blends  
gospel, patriotism

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

Two years ago, Sen. Lloyd Bentsen stopped in Owensboro for a Democratic rally at the Big Independent Tobacco Warehouse near the end of his bid for the vice presidency. Alma Randolph was asked to sing "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

When she finished, the walls of the warehouse were ringing. And her ovation rivaled Bentsen's.

Saturday, the 34-year-old Ohio County native recorded that song and eight others on her first album - "I Surrender All," a blend of patriotic and gospel songs.

After 30 years singing for area churches and civic groups, Randolph is taking her music on the road. After the album, recorded at a local studio, is released in late March, she plans a "coming-out concert" followed by increased bookings outside the area.

She's a gospel singer, but with Operation Desert Storm, Randolph is seeing more demand for patriotic material.

"I've always been very patriotic," she said. "I enjoy singing about freedom."

Audiences now are expressing that patriotism more than they were even a few months ago, Randolph said. "I can tell a drastic difference when I stand before an audience now. Tears are flowing down the faces of men and women," she said.

The self-produced album also includes "God Bless the USA" and "Statue of Liberty" along with six gospel songs. It will be on sale at the Baptist Book Store in Owensboro by the end of March, she said.

Randolph is the community relations specialist for the City of Owensboro.

She plans to keep that job – at least for now.

"It would be a little premature to leave the city and go on the road," she said. "I do have some very good prospects" from record labels, however.

For now, she'll limit her performing to nights and weekends.

People who have heard Randolph sing may wonder why it's taken her so long to decide to make a career of her music.

"I've always been a very shy person and I still am," she said. "It takes an effort for me to stand before an audience and speak or sing. But I received a lot of encouragement from my family and friends."

It was also partly a religious decision. "In the past few years, I had several disappointments and some very unpleasant experiences," Randolph said. "I finally decided to surrender everything over to God. Immediately, everything began to change for me. It's all for his glory."

So, she said, "I decided to accept the challenge" of becoming a professional musician. "My engagements have increased substantially," Randolph said. And several people outside the area have expressed an interest in helping market her tapes, she said.

She's putting together an advisory board to help plan her "coming-out concert" in April. The board will help recruit musicians for her new band and help with publicity.

Randolph, daughter of Louise Randolph and the late Rev. George W. Randolph, has been singing since she was 4. She's a former member of the Beaver Dam City Council.

"I'm firmly committed to gospel," Randolph said. "I'll be singing primarily in churches, before civic groups and at conventions. But I'll sing anywhere as long as they accept my music. I won't compromise." cutline - Gospel singer Alma Randolph recorded her first album at a local studio last week.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro. KY, Wednesday, 4 December 1991, p.1C:**

**Owensboro singer to perform  
at governor's inauguration**

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

When Brereton Jones takes the oath as governor of Kentucky at 1 p.m. CST Tuesday, Alma Randolph's voice will still be echoing in the hills of Frankfort.

Randolph, a 35-year-old Owensboro gospel singer, will sing "God Bless America" just before Jones is sworn in as governor.

Jones heard Randolph, community relations specialist for the City of Owensboro, sing at the Daviess County Democratic Picnic in August and at the Kentucky League of Cities convention here in September.

"He commented that he'd like to invite me to Frankfort to perform during his administration," Randolph said. "I never dreamed it would be the inauguration."

It will be the first governor's inauguration Randolph has attended.

But she's no stranger to public performances. The Ohio County native has been singing since she was 4.

In March, Randolph recorded her first album - "I Surrender All," a blend of patriotic and gospel songs.

Since then, she's been on the road performing an average of three weekends each month.


Performances have included a "coming-out concert" in Owensboro, the Everly Brothers Homecoming Festival in Central City and concerts from New York to Missouri.

She recently finished writing two songs - a contemporary gospel tune with a Caribbean beat and "A Cry From Darkness," about the homelessness problem. She's offering the latter song to homeless advocacy groups around the country, Randolph said.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro. KY, Wednesday, 15 July 1992, pp.1A & 8A:**

**Randolph a hit with Democrats**  
Beaver Dam native a  
high note of convention  
for family, area fans



By Karen Owen, Messenger-Inquirer



Alma Randolph's stirring performance of "God Bless America" at the Democratic National Convention went off a bit ahead of the announced time. If you missed it or want to videotape the song, Century Cable subscribers should switch to Channel 2. It is scheduled to follow the 6 p.m. newscast tonight.

BEAVER DAM - Louise Randolph spent Tuesday afternoon waiting for the Democratic National Convention to begin.

She would be watching even if her only daughter wasn't scheduled to sing on national television, Randolph said. She and her children are devoted Democrats, after all.

But this year's event was extra special. Alma Randolph was appearing on the same bill as Aretha Franklin, Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter at Madison Square Garden.

"I really think it's a set-off day for her," Louise Randolph said. "If this is not the chance for her to go big time, there won't be a chance."

Louise Randolph said she has been praying for this chance since Alma, now 35, started singing at about age 4.

The second of four children and the only girl in the family, Alma played a lot of softball and climbed a lot of trees, but was also disciplined about her music, her mother and youngest brother, David, recalled Tuesday.

As a youngster she almost drove her family nuts, singing the same song over and over again as she practiced her poses, her family said.

"She would get in the mirror just like she was a movie star," her mother said.

However, "She couldn't carry a tune." Exasperated, Louise Randolph told her, "Girl, I'm going to pray God will touch your voice and you will be a singer."

While she kept on singing, Alma grew up, became a stenographer, ran successfully three times for the Beaver Dam City Council, became executive director of the Owensboro Human Relations Commission and eventually was hired as a city community relations specialist for Owensboro.

She made her professional singing debut in April 1991 and sang at Gov. Brereton Jones' inauguration in January. Even before that, she sang at a rally in Owensboro for U.S. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen when he was running for the vice presidency and for a Kentucky League of Cities convention in Owensboro.

Alma Randolph was nervous when she left Owensboro for New York Monday, but "she called me today and said all fear is gone," Louise Randolph said.

When the big moment arrives and her daughter's picture appears on the screen, "You may see some tears falling," the mother said before the convention broadcast, "because I have prayed for Alma for so long."

Suddenly, David Randolph dashed into the living room from the kitchen, where he had been monitoring C-SPAN while his mother kept an eye on the Cable News Network.

"It's on!" he cried, flipping channels just in time to see his sister appear on the screen in a new, black, bead-trimmed dress bought just for the occasion.

Mother and son erupted into applause and cheers.

"Sing, girl," Louise Randolph said as Alma began "God Bless America." She nodded along, lifting her hand in the air from time to time in silent agreement.

The television cameras showed people in the Madison Square Garden crowd singing along and waving small flags while Alma Randolph sang.

When Alma threw back her head and hit the last, high note, her delighted mother and brother whooped and laughed and clapped.

"All right!" her mother said.

Too soon for the Randolphs, Alma disappeared.

"Isn't that something?" her mother marveled. "She looked beautiful."

"Fantastic," agreed David Randolph.

Mother and son kept watching the screen as if hoping Alma Randolph would somehow reappear, but the spell was broken. She was gone.

"I wish she could have sung two or three songs," David Randolph said.

"I look for Alma to sign a (recording) contract any time now," her mother said.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro. KY, Saturday, 16 October 1993, p.1B:**

**Local gospel singer creates  
foundation to aid poor kids**

By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer

Needy children in Owensboro soon will get a helping hand from a local gospel singer who remembers the pain of growing up in poverty.

"I lived in poverty for 13 years after my father died," Alma Randolph said Friday in announcing the creation of her Alma Randolph Charitable Foundation for Children in Need. "I've traveled the road these children are traveling now."

She hopes to raise \$25,000 to launch the foundation with a Jan. 13 concert – "Alma and Friends: For The Children" – in the RiverPark Center's Cannon Hall. Tickets will go on sale in mid-November.

"It will be an annual benefit concert," Randolph said. "I'll perform each year with friends who are musically talented. Hopefully as my career grows, we can bring in more artists to give of their time."

An 18-member board will oversee the foundation and distribute the money, she said.

Clothing, shoes, glasses and enrollment fees for extracurricular activities at school would be among the things the money could be used for. Churches can apply for money to assist children in their congregations, Randolph said.

She launched her performing career 2 1/2 years ago with a concert to welcome home veterans of the Persian Gulf War. In December 1991, Randolph performed for Gov. Brereton Jones' inauguration. She later performed at the 1992 National Democratic Convention in New York's Madison Square Garden.

"The Owensboro community has been so good to me," Randolph said. "They've supported me in everything I've attempted. Now I want to give something back to the community."

The first money will be distributed next year after the bills for the concert are paid.

"It's definitely a massive undertaking," Randolph said. "But we will be able to touch a lot of children."



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro. KY, Sunday, 20 October 1996, pp.1F & 9F:**



By Keith Lawrence, Messenger-Inquirer



As a child growing up in Beaver Dam, Alma Randolph was a shy little girl who dreamed of being the center of attention. In 1960, when Randolph was 3, her father, the Rev. George Randolph, an Alabama-born coal miner, died of liver cancer at age 69. Her mother, Louise Randolph, a 32-year-old homemaker, was left alone to raise four small children – Robert, 5; Alma, 3; Tommy, 2; and David, 7 months with no income. It was those years – and the warm love that came with them – that shaped Randolph.

She glides into the spotlight like a butterfly.

Black dress. Gold necklace. Long ebony hair, cascading to her shoulders. Three-quarter-inch milk-white nails set against mahogany-bronze skin that almost glows in the spotlight. Teeth flashing. Bright sable eyes dancing.

Head thrown back in gospel ecstasy, her voice soars until it fills every inch of the largest room.

At 39, Owensboro contemporary Christian singer Alma Randolph seems to have it all. Beauty, talent, success.

But people see only the butterfly. They don't see the cocoon that held her so long.

They don't see the shy little girl, dressed in her mother's heels, using a pencil for a microphone, singing for hours on end into a mirror, pretending it's an audience.

They don't see the plump, plain girl she saw in that mirror. Or the pain of a strict Pentecostal faith that forbade the makeup, jewelry and pretty clothes she longed for.

They don't see the childhood poverty. The outdoor toilet. The washtub for bathing in the kitchen. The hand-me-downs she wore to school. The free-meal card she tried to hide from her friends.

But it was those years – and the warm love that came with them – that shaped Randolph.

Her family's yard - on East Third Street in Beaver Dam - was where the neighborhood children played. And Randolph – the only girl in a family with three boys – was always in the middle of it.

"I was such a tomboy," she laughs. "My mother was afraid I'd never be a lady."

#### Coal miner's daughter

In 1960, when Randolph was 3, her father, the Rev. George Randolph, an Alabama-born coal miner, died of liver cancer at age 69.

Her mother, Louise, a 32-year-old homemaker, was left alone to raise four small children – Robert, 5; Alma, 3; Tommy, 2; and David, 7 months. Four small children and no income. It was five years before Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty began to beef up government assistance programs for the poor.

"I was 16 before I could go shopping for back-to-school clothes," Randolph says. "I was always so aware of our plight."

Today, her Owensboro apartment looks like a photo shoot for a fashion magazine. Snow-white couches. Large modern art. A glass dining table. A four-poster bed.

A closet as large as a small bathroom is filled with gowns, dresses and more than 40 pairs of shoes. More are in storage across town.

It's a long way from Beaver Dam's East Third Street.

A shy little girl who dreamed of being the center of attention, Randolph seemed to talk constantly. It was a way of masking the shyness, she says now.

"I remember Ms. Ferrell sent a note home to my mother saying I talked too much in class," she says. "And I was dumb enough to give it to her!" Louise Randolph believed in discipline. And her daughter remembers their home as the one where the trees were picked bare of switches.

Louise Randolph laughs. "She didn't like a switch. But I didn't have to get on her very often."

Grace Ferrell, Randolph's fourth-grade teacher, says, "She was one of the sweetest, quietest children. She was a little bit timid in the classroom. I might have told her to be a little quieter sometime. But she was not a problem. She was such a pretty little thing."

"I always wanted to be involved in extracurricular activities in school," Randolph remembers. "But they all cost money. I wanted to be in the band so bad. I wanted to play the clarinet. So I signed up, hoping a miracle would happen."

But the miracle never came. At least, not the one she hoped for.

"My mom had to tell me we just couldn't afford it," Randolph says. "She had to be certain that we had three meals a day and clean clothes to wear. All my clothes were given to me. But they were always clean."

Denied an instrument, Randolph turned back to her voice, singing hours on end until her mother, in exasperation, prayed that God would give her daughter a beautiful voice or take away the desire to sing.

'I never heard such a noise.'

"She couldn't hold a tune at all," Louise Randolph chuckles today. "She would just sing and throw that head back like she does now. I never heard such a noise."

Bernestine Jones, a friend since grade school, agrees. "No, she couldn't sing," Jones says with a laugh. "But she tried all the time. Her singing had to come from the Lord. It didn't come from her."

"When I was 16, my voice began to change," Randolph says. "I sang in the high school choir. And I was able to reach notes I couldn't reach before."

A gradual change began when Randolph was 14, her mother says. "I think the Lord just got tired of listening to her and decided 'I'm going to bless this child,' " she says.

The year Randolph turned 16, the family finally collected 13 years' back pay from her father's Social Security and a regular monthly check. By then, the whole family was also working, cleaning buildings in Beaver Dam. They got indoor plumbing that year. And bought back-to-school clothes for the first time.

And Randolph's voice began developing the volume that still amazes listeners today.

On Nov. 1, 1988, she sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" in a giant Owensboro tobacco warehouse for a Democratic rally with U.S. Sen. Lloyd Bentsen, the vice presidential nominee.

The crowd of nearly 5,000 couldn't stop talking about the tiny woman with the 200-pound voice that seemed to shake the very rafters of the building.

"I guess it's just a gift," Randolph says. "A lot of times when I'm just fooling around, I reach for the volume and it's not there. But it's always been there when I need it."

'...obsessed about singing'

It was the buzz from that political rally that persuaded Randolph to turn professional in 1991.

Then-Gov. Brereton Jones invited her to sing at his inauguration that year. Gov. Paul Patton invited her back for his in 1995.

And in 1992, Randolph was invited to New York City, where she sang a rousing "God Bless America" at the opening of the Democratic National Convention.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson kissed her cheek. Aretha Franklin shook her hand. And the Kentucky delegation sent a dozen red roses.

She was suddenly a celebrity.

"That was fun," Randolph says. "I could just belt it out in Madison Square Garden. I like a place where I don't have to hold back."

She can't remember a time when she wasn't singing.

"My brothers and I were always very close," Randolph says. "We would entertain ourselves playing church. My oldest brother was always the preacher. I always wanted to be the singer."

The year her father died, Randolph and her brothers sang for the first time - at the Church of God of Prophecy in Hartford, which her father founded. "Jesus Loves Me," they sang with childlike certainty. And "Blessed Assurance."

"I was always so shy I would just look at the floor while I sang," Randolph says. "I'm still shy. I'm as outgoing as I am because I've worked on it for so long. I knew I couldn't sing and be shy. And I was obsessed about singing."

Sister Mary Henning, a Brescia College voice instructor who worked with Randolph on breathing techniques, says Randolph "has a very lyrical quality to her voice, very clear tones and a nice range. And she does her music her own way."

'I had four strikes against me'

Integration had been completed by the time Randolph started school in 1963. And she says she grew up relatively free of racism. "But there were times when race was a factor. I knew there was a difference."

Ohio County's black population is tiny. Only about 1 percent. And Randolph was usually the only African American in her classes.

"Ninety percent of my bookings are at predominantly white churches," she says. "I never dreamed that my music - or I - would be so accepted."

In high school, Randolph dreamed of a career in nursing. So she took a health careers class at Owensboro Vocational School and quickly learned she wanted to do something else.

Margie Niehaus, the teacher, remembers Randolph as "a little sparkler. I was worried about her at first, because I thought she had a little wild streak. But she had such a cute personality, you couldn't help but love her."

Wild streak?

"She did have a wild streak," Jones says with a laugh. "But she's calmed down now. We all have. That's all I'm gonna say."

When Randolph graduated from Ohio County High in 1975, she enrolled at Owensboro Junior College of Business and got a job at Nestaway Inc., an Ohio County manufacturer of dishwasher racks, becoming administrative assistant to the plant manager.

Co-workers encouraged her to run for the Beaver Dam City Commission in 1980 - when she was only 23.

"People said I had four strikes against me," Randolph says. "I was black. I was a woman. I was young. And I was poor. But if you tell me I can't do something, I'll do it – if it's possible."

Six seats were open. Eleven white men were already in the race.

"Alma had these little pink cards with a rose on them," Ohio Judge-Executive Dudley Cooper remembers. "She went to every house in town. And she won. I think people could just see that spark in her. And they believed in her."

Beaver Dam had only 15 black residents then. But Randolph got 568 votes for a fourth-place finish to become the first woman to serve on the Beaver Dam council and the first African American to hold office in Ohio County.

She won re-election twice and then resigned to become Owensboro's human relations director in 1987.

Two years later, Randolph resigned that post to become the city's human resources/community relations specialist.

She says she has no further political ambitions.

'...a unique talent'

On April 14, 1991, Randolph fulfilled her childhood dream of becoming a professional singer. More than 700 people packed the auditorium at Owensboro High School for her debut concert.

Privately produced albums were released in 1991, 1993 and 1995.

And since February 1995, Randolph has hosted a local cable television show, "Focus on Owensboro."

For the first few years, she was on the road singing every weekend. But "between my job and traveling, I was always tired," Randolph says. "Now I just travel every other weekend. I still handle all my own bookings. I enjoy stability in my life."

Her first Nashville recording project is scheduled for release this fall - to the nation's funeral homes.

Jack Smith, who signed Randolph for his Precious Memories label, calls her "a unique talent. She's a total package - talent and personality. You get a good feeling inside when you listen to her."

Randolph recorded 15 songs that funeral homes can play on the telephone, during visitation and during funerals.

"The producer had to keep reminding me – 'These are for funerals,' " she says.

But much of her exuberance stayed in the finished product. Her religious faith tells her that death is just a transition, not an end.

Still, Randolph says, "I hate to sing for funerals and weddings." The music at both is too structured for her style of performing.

But a recent funeral brought her national attention.

Randolph represented Bill Monroe's native Ohio County, singing at the funeral of the "father of bluegrass music" last month in Rosine. She was the only woman asked to sing and the only nonbluegrass performer.

At the cemetery, where she sang "My Old Kentucky Home," Grand Ole Opry member Ricky Skaggs hugged Randolph. "Bless you," he said, "you did great." Others shook her hand and took her picture.

"...the fear is gone."

Each time she waits to go on stage, the old shyness creeps back and fear rises in the pit of her stomach. "But once that microphone is in my hands," Randolph says, "I'm in control and the fear is gone."

During a performance, as her voice fills the room, Randolph slips away into her own private world - once again the little girl in her mother's heels, singing into a pencil. It's only when the last song is ending that she becomes fully aware that now the audience is real.

As she slid into her mid-30s, Randolph finally found the determination to become the woman she had always dreamed of.

"I never saw myself as attractive before," she says. "I'm not quite 5 feet tall, and I was always plump.

And her Pentecostal faith forbade the beauty she wanted.

"We didn't dare wear makeup, jewelry other than a watch, pants, shorts or sleeveless blouses," Randolph says. "We wore dresses to our ankles. I didn't wear makeup until I was 20 - and that was just foundation and clear nail polish."

The faith that took her to church every Tuesday and Friday night and twice on Sunday as a child is still as strong today, Randolph says. And she still attends that same little church.

But two years ago, Randolph decided to make major changes.

"I've always felt that God looks at the heart of a person, not what they're wearing," she says. "And I've decided to be me."

The transformation included a diet that shed 30 pounds in six months, taking her to 116 pounds.

Then came the bright, short dresses she had always wanted. "I love clothes," Randolph says. "I always told myself when I got a job, I would buy clothes. I rarely dress casually. I always like to dress up."

Next came 3/4-inch acrylic-overlay nails that have become a trademark and a hair-weave that added length, fullness and waves to her natural hair.

Then came surgery to narrow her nose. It also improved her breathing – and her voice.

If there is a resemblance to Diana Ross, it's not altogether unintentional. "She is so beautiful," Randolph says of the singer she's always admired.

"If it's meant to be..."

Home is still important. Randolph shared a bedroom with her mother until she was 24. And she still spends many Sundays and most holidays back home.

"My mom is my friend," she says. "Sometimes I forget that she's my mother. She goes on the road with me and handles the concessions – my albums and photos."

Louise Randolph says, "We have a big time together. You know how two women are. We always go to the malls when we travel."

"Alma's mother built a strong foundation of strength for her," Cooper says. "She's a marvelous woman. And Alma just grew up with this great love for people."

Three years ago, Randolph fulfilled another dream – raising money to buy back-to-school clothes for children who would have nothing new to wear on that important first day. More than \$48,000 has been raised by the first three concerts, and more than 600 children have worn new clothes to school.

Saturday night at 6:30, the Alma Randolph Charitable Foundation presents its fourth annual "Alma and Friends...For The Children" concert at the RiverPark Center.

But sometimes, Randolph wonders if she should be more aggressive, spend more time pounding the streets of Nashville, trying to find a deal with a major record label.

She'd like to be able to replace her tapes of background music with a live band "that can predict what I'm going to do next."

But, she says, "If it's meant to be, it will happen."



Left: Alma Randolph during her term on the Beaver Dam City Commission. She served from 1980 to 1987. Right: Randolph recording her first album, "I Surrender All."



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro. KY, Sunday, 20 April 2008, p.6G:**



Randolph – Patton

The wedding of Alma Randolph and Larry Patton took place at 4:30 p.m. March 1, 2008, at The Hines Center, Philpot. Bishop Robert Randolph presided, and Bishop Alva Wilson gave a special opening prayer.

The bride, daughter of Louise Randolph and the late Bishop George Randolph of Beaver Dam, is the human resources/community relations specialist for the city of Owensboro and founder of the Alma Randolph Charitable Foundation Inc.

The groom, son of Helen Waddell of Owensboro and the late Ellis "Weasel" Patton of Beaver Dam, is a contractor.

Maid of honor was Dr. Aretha Cloud Stuart of Dallas. Female attendants were Tracy Marksberry of Owensboro and Marcia Moorner of Dayton, Ohio. Honorary attendants were Dr. Marilyn Brookman, Jane Cambron, Sandy Rose, Cyndi Sturgeon and Marian Turley, all of Owensboro; Juawanda Coleman of Bowling Green; Charlene Finn of Nashville; Doris McHenry and Susan Wesley, both of Hartford; Carol Poling of North Haven, Conn.; Kay Randolph of Beaver Dam; and Rosetta Wilcox of Decatur, Ga. Bell ringers were Amber Harris and Kristeon Robinson.

Best man was Allen Patton of Beaver Dam. Male attendants were Alan Culbertson of Greenville and Carl Mayes of Madisonville. Ushers were Arvin Jones, Richard McHenry, Preston Randolph and Steve Smith.

The bride was escorted by her two brothers, David and Thomas Randolph.

Belinda Haliburton emceed the wedding and reception. John Docimo was the musician, and Teresa Patchin was soloist.

The couple honeymooned in Cancun, Mexico.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 21 October 2011, pp.1B & 4B:**

### **Randolph-Patton leaving city post**

Alma Randolph-Patton will be retiring from the city of Owensboro as human resources/community relations specialist with the community development department effective Oct. 31.

Randolph-Patton gave several reasons for retiring after 22 years and nine months of service. She said that she's at the age that she can begin a new career, and above all, spend more time with her husband, Larry Patton, who has a serious health problem.

"Larry is better. For awhile it was from bed to sofa, but he can do some work now," Randolph-Patton said. "All any of us have is what we have now. I've always appreciated life, but now know the importance of making the best of every moment."

Randolph-Patton is giving up her daily job, but she'll still be busy. "I'm retired, but I'll be working," Randolph-Patton said. Before working for the city, she was executive director of the Owensboro Human Relations Commission and investigated complaints of sexual harassment, and race and age discrimination. She said her experience as director of the commission and community relations specialist prompted her to create an agency that will address discrimination issues in the private sector.

Higher Ground Consulting Agency will be opening soon.

"Alma has been bouncing ideas off me," said Tracy McQueen, owner of Page Turner Communications that's handling the marketing of Higher Ground.

"Alma has a great concept," McQueen said. "Higher Ground will be a valuable service needed by employers," McQueen said. Bringing in someone from out of town to give a video presentation — instead of having a local agency — is not a terribly effective tool in handling sexual harassment and discrimination issues, McQueen said.

"Alma won't be working for a public entity, but Higher Ground will have an element of public service," McQueen said.

McQueen and Randolph-Patton became friends when they both worked at City Hall. McQueen is former community coordinator and assistant to the Owensboro city manager.

The first time McQueen saw Randolph-Patton was at her debut concert at Owensboro High School in 1991. At the time McQueen was a reporter for the Messenger-Inquirer covering the concert. "Her voice sent chills up my spine. I was amazed at how talented she was."

For the past several years, Randolph-Patton has not been performing because of neck and jaw surgeries that prevented her from singing. But on Nov. 20, she will be returning to the very stage where McQueen first saw her. She will be performing at the annual fundraiser for The Alma Randolph Charitable Foundation that for 17 years has been buying back-to-school clothing for children in need.

The gospel singer knows first hand what is like to not have new clothes that first day of school.

"We were never hungry or homeless, but I did have some embarrassing moments," Randolph-Patton said. "If there had been something like the foundation, it would have taken a load off my mother's shoulders."

"Alma is just a wonderful, wonderful person," Jane Cambron said. "I've been on the foundation's board 16 years and I know she has touched thousands of kids."

She'll watch the kids shop for their clothes through tears, Cambron said. "She knows what they are feeling."

"I'm so excited that she'll be singing again," Cambron said.

McQueen said she's also looking forward to her friend singing again. "I think sometimes when people see us together they think what could they possibly have in common. "She's glam and I'm not," McQueen said with a laugh.

"Wherever you run into Alma she looks like a million bucks. I call it Almaized. I'm in a T-shirt and jeans and she's always Almaized," she said.

"Some people might think she's all about glamour, but she's really a good person with a strong moral foundation who really cares about the community."



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro. KY, Friday, 28 February 2020, pp.1A & 2A:**

## Randolph wins 2020 ATHENA Award



Alma Randolph smiles after receiving the 2020 ATHENA Award during the award luncheon on Thursday as emcee Kirk Kirkpatrick looks on at the Owensboro Convention Center.

### Burroughs, first black female city commissioner, wins Legacy Award

Alma Randolph, the latest award recipient honoring the accomplishments of local women, hopes she serves as an inspiration for young girls.

Randolph received the 2020 ATHENA Award during a luncheon on Thursday. It's given to women who champion women's issues, devote time to the community and demonstrate excellence at work.

Randolph said she was "beyond elated" to win the award, but credited numerous people for having an impact on her life.

"This moment is so much bigger than me," she said. "It's for my cousins in attendance today who support me through this journey called life. ... It's for my special friends who stand beside me and hold me up when I need it the most."

Randolph gave her remarks to about 600 people gathered at the Owensboro Convention Center. She founded the Alma Randolph Charitable Foundation in 1993, which has bought clothing and shoes for more than 16,000 disadvantaged children and raised more than \$1.2 million since its inception.

Randolph previously served as a Beaver Dam city commissioner and is the first African-American and woman to hold elected office in Ohio County. She also serves on the Kentucky Human Rights Commission and is the owner of Higher Ground Consulting, LLC, a business designed to work with employers on providing in-house Equal Employment Opportunity Diversity & Sensitivity training for management and non-management staff.

"My prayer is that as a result of me being selected this year's recipient, one of the little girls will be inspired by my story and as a result, she will stand here some day to receive her ATHENA Award and she will say, 'this moment is so much bigger than me,' " Randolph said.

Olive Burroughs received the Legacy Award, which is a posthumous award given to women trailblazers. In 1995 Burroughs was the first African-American woman elected to the Owensboro City Commission. She helped develop the Neighborhood Alliances and the Owensboro Youth Council.

Girls Inc. and the Greater Owensboro Chamber of Commerce are the ATHENA Award contributors. Throughout the luncheon, numerous people associated with Girls Inc., a non-profit organization that inspires and empowers girls, gave testimony about how the institution helped them. The organization offers mentoring and life skills instruction, among other services.

"Girls Inc. has opened my eyes to an endless stretch of opportunities. If it was not for Girls Inc., I would not be standing here today giving a speech in front of all of you," said Kaliyah Green, a 14-year-old freshman at Owensboro High School.



**Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 2 March 2021,  
Chamber Matters supplement, p.1:**

**Owensboro Women Leading the Way**



Alma Randolph

Alma Randolph trains management and support staff in workplaces to ensure their policies, procedures and practices meet Equal Employment Opportunity standards. She previously worked as a Diversity/Sensitivity Trainer for Higher Ground Consulting Services, a Kentucky Certified Minority Female Owned Business. At age 24, Randolph was the youngest person and first elected to the Beaver Dam City Council and was the first African American elected to office in Ohio County. In 1993, she founded the Alma Randolph Charitable Foundation, which has invested \$1.3 million in upgrading homes and providing clothing for disadvantaged children. She currently serves as a Commissioner for the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, where she served as the 2nd Judicial District Chair from 2018-2021. Her awards include the 1994 Daviess County Bar Association Liberty Bell Award; 1995 Owensboro Board of Realtors Heritage Award; 2000 Leadership Owensboro Alumni Association Outstanding Alumni Award for Human Needs and Services; 2004 Ohio County High School Wall of Fame inductee; a 2013 Inductee in the Kentucky Commission on Women’s Hall of Fame; 2018 NAACP President’s Award; and the 2020 Athena Award.



### **Family Notes**

Alma Louise Randolph, daughter of George Washington Randolph & Louise Coomes, was born in Beaver Dam, Ohio County, KY in 1957. Alma’s father was born 16 January 1893 in Livingston, Alabama and died in Hartford, Ohio County, KY on 6 September 1960. A coal miner and minister he was the founder of the Church of God of Prophecy, later the Harvest House Church, in Hartford, KY. He was buried in the Hayti Cemetery in Hartford. He was the son of Mose Randolph & Willie Ann Robertson.

Alma’s mother, Louise Coomes Randolph was born in Ohio County, KY on 31 July 1928 and died 23 May 2019. Her obituary reports her parents as James Earl Thomas & Lelia Jones. Louise was a member of Harvest House Church of Hartford and was the Church Mother and Chairperson of the Pastor's Aid Committee. She served several terms on the Beaver Dam Housing Authority. Louise Randolph was survived by one daughter, Alma Randolph, and three sons, Robert Thomas & David Randolph. Louise was buried at the Oakwood Cemetery in Hartford, KY.

