

# The Gaither Family



Walter B. Gaither, one of seven children of Fairfield County farmers Walter and Fannie Mae Little, and Fannie Mae Little, second daughter born to Anderson County homemaker Molly and mill worker Louvel Little, met at Rock Hill's Friendship Junior College. After graduating, they married and started a family near Great Falls. Fannie Mae became a teacher, steering generations of students through eighth grade until the mid-1950s when many Black teachers were fired following the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. Walter earned a bachelor's degree from Benedict College and became a brick and tile mason.

The Gaithers were very active in educational, fraternal, and church matters, especially at Pleasant Grove AME Zion Church.

The Gaither children have made distinguished contributions in the many places where they have built careers, made homes, and raised families. Dr. Thomas Walter, a graduate of Clafin College, was a leader in the Friendship Nine civil rights student movement in Rock Hill and an organizer of the 1961 Freedom Riders. He retired as a Professor of Mycology at Slippery Rock University in the Pennsylvania University

System. Herman Kenneth, a graduate of Clafin College, retired as Superintendent of Beaufort County Public Schools after having previously served Beaufort schools as a teacher and as Chief Fiscal Officer. He is a much sought after education consultant, and has been an important member of the Clafin College Board of Trustees. Glenda Jean, eldest daughter, was a Freedom Rider, and retired as an Atlanta public schools librarian and continues to reside in Atlanta where she and her husband raised their family. She is also the author of a published book of poems.

Thomas, Herman, and Glenda all completed their elementary education in a one-teacher school under their mother, and later all attended Clafin University.

Edmund Barry Gaither, a Morehouse College graduate, retired from Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, and remains Director of the National Center of Afro-American Artists. A graduate of the University of Cincinnati, Diane Gaither Thompson retired as Program Manager for Living Arrangements for the Developmentally Disabled in Ohio.

Match each member of the Gaither Family to their accomplishments by drawing a line from the name to the accomplishment.

**Walter B. Gaither**

**Fannie Mae Little**

**Dr. Thomas Walter Gaither**

**Herman Kenneth Gaither**

**Glenda Jean Gaither**

**Edmund Barry Gaither**

**Diane Gaither Thompson**

Son of Walter and Fannie Mae; Superintendent of Beaufort County Public Schools; education consultant

Daughter of Walter and Fannie Mae; Freedom Rider; Atlanta public school librarian and author

One of seven children of Walter and Fannie Mae; husband of Fannie Mae; brick and tile mason

Daughter of Walter and Fannie Mae; University of Cincinnati graduate; Program Manager for Living Arrangements for the Developmentally Disabled in Ohio

Son of Walter and Fannie Mae; Friendship Nine civil rights leader; professor of Mycology at Slippery Rock University

Second daughter of Molly and Lovel Little; Wife of Walter; teacher of students through eighth grade

Son of Walter and Fannie Mae; Morehouse College graduate; Director of the National Center of Afro-American Artists

## Using the following article, track the Freedom Riders journey on the map by writing in the name of each city the Riders stopped in mentioned in the article.

The Freedom Riders set off from Washington D.C. on May 4th, 1961, on what was supposed to be a two-week ride to New Orleans to challenge Jim Crow Laws in the south. Passing through major cities in Virginia proved to be uneventful but upon arriving in Charlotte, North Carolina, one of the Freedom Riders was arrested for sitting at a whites only shoe-shine stand. The Carolinas would be the start of turbulence for the group as the further south they went, the more adversity they would face. In Rock Hill, South Carolina, three riders were attacked for trying to use a whites only restroom. Among those attacked was a young John Lewis, who later became a U.S. congressman.

Martin Luther King Jr. warned the Freedom Riders of the violence ahead when they stopped in Atlanta, Georgia on May 12th, 1961. The Freedom Riders pressed on through Georgia into Alabama, stopping in Anniston where they were attacked by a mob of about 200 Klu Klux Klansmen. This would not be the end of the violence towards the Freedom Riders by the KKK as a 2nd bus and activists were attacked again in Birmingham, Alabama later that day. These horrific events would prompt CORE, the Congress of Racial Equality, to end the ride. SNCC, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, picked up the cause and continued from Montgomery, Alabama to Jackson, Mississippi with a National Guard escort.

Jackson would be the final stop for now for the Freedom Riders as members were jailed upon arrival under charges of incitement to riot, breach of the peace, and failure to obey a police officer. These arrests would bring national and international media attention to the Freedom Riders cause, leading to other Freedom Riders coming to the south to take their place and protest.

