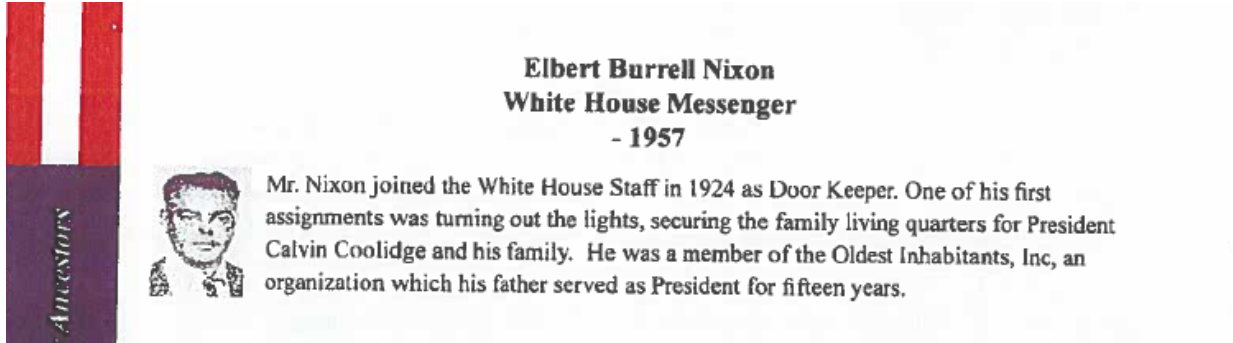


The Quest for the Oldest Inhabitants, Incorporated Continues

On February 27, 2026, AOI member and “The Two AOI’s” contributing “detective” Toni White-Richardson forwarded a clip from historic Woodlawn Cemetery that had caught her eye:



Listed was a reference to one of the interred, Elbert Burrell Nixon, citing that Mr. Nixon had been a “Door Keeper” at the White House in 1927, that his responsibilities included turning out the lights, securing the family living quarters for President Calvin Coolidge and his family and, that he was a member of the Oldest Inhabitants, Incorporated... an organization which his father served as President for fifteen years. This tribute comports with obituaries of the times that Elbert Nixon on Feb. 18, 1957:

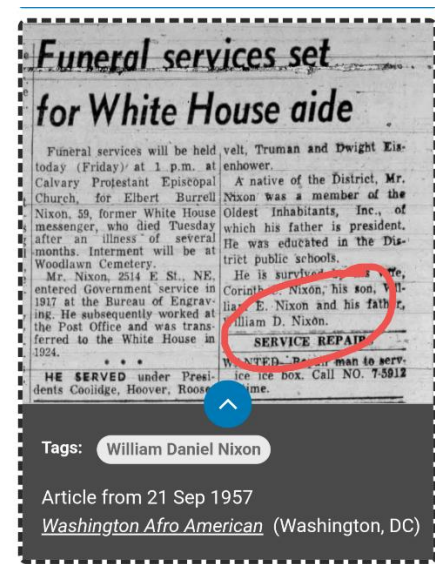


Figure 1 "Afro American" announcement for Elbert Nixon, Feb. 18, 1957.

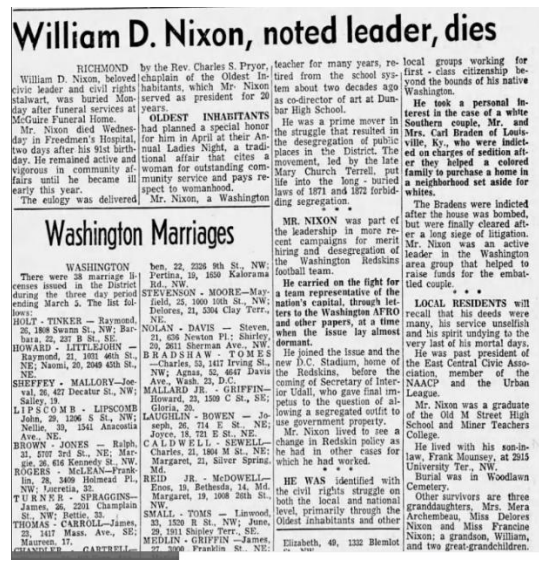


Figure 2 William D. Nixon's 1962 obituary, "Afro-American".

The obituary lists Mr. Nixon as a “former White House messenger” who had served at the Government Printing Office in 1917 and then with the Post Office until he “transferred to the White House in 1924... He served under Presidents Coolidge, Hoover, Roosevelt, Truman and Dwight Eisenhower.” Among his survivors the obituary lists his “father, William D. Nixon” who the AOI of DC considers to be one of the last known President of the parallel Black organization, The Oldest Inhabitants, Incorporated. Elbert Nixon, too, was a member of the Oldest Inhabitants, Incorporated. It would be interesting to speculate if his son, William E. Nixon, followed in his and his father’s footsteps and was also a member.

Researching Elbert’s history, we stumbled upon a few other interesting but sad items related to the AOI of DC’s quest for the records of their parallel organization. While we knew that Delores Mounsey had died in 2022, we learned that her sister Mera Mounsey Archambeau died June 26, 2025. Delores and her sister were recognized along with other family members at the February 2016 AOI luncheon dedicated to their father William D. Nixon and his educational and civic accomplishments.



Figure 3 Mera Mounsey Archambaugh, AOI President Bill Brown, AOI Historian Nelson Rimensnyder and Delores Mounsey.

The Quest for the Oldest Inhabitants, Incorporated Continues



Figure 4 Delores Mounsey and her brother-in-law Lester Archambaugh at the AOI's William D. Nixon tribute, Feb. 2016

Delores Mounsey was born in Washington, D.C. the middle daughter of Frank E. Mounsey and Ethel L. Nixon. Delores graduated from Lebanon Valley College in 1962 with a BS in Medical Technology. She had a 40-year career at Howard University ultimately being named Vice Dean of Allied Health. Her advocacy of health education was exemplary as she secured and managed numerous grants to provide career opportunity in health and allied health to Howard students.

At the time of her death, she was survived by her sister Mera Mounsey Archambeau and brother-in-law Lester Milward Archambeau II; nieces Shellye Archambeau, Lindy Archambeau and Niki Archambeau Brown (Allen Brown) and nephew Lester Milward Archambaugh III (Kathleen Archambaugh) and a host of nieces and nephews, great grand nieces and nephews and god children.

Mera Edythe Mounsey Archambeau was born April 15, 1938, the eldest of three daughters, to Ethel Louise Nixon and Frank Emanuel Mounsey into an exceptional family in Washington, DC. She was named for her paternal grandmother Esmera

The Quest for the Oldest Inhabitants, Incorporated Continues

Margaret Mounsey, who was called “Big Mera” after Mera’s birth. Her middle name tributed her maternal grandmother, Edith Tinney Nixon. Her mother, the only woman graduate in 1934 from Howard University’s Medical School, was initially certified as an OB/GYN, and then as a psychiatrist in her mid-thirties. Her father’s family immigrated from St. Lucia, West Indies settling in Harlem. Frank Mounsey moved to DC and worked as Chief Admitting Officer at Freedmen’s Hospital. Her grandfather William Daniel Nixon was a major influence in her life, as an art teacher, civil rights activist, sheriff in Herndon VA, investor in the stock market and real estate in Washington DC, Herndon, and Highland Beach (the first African American municipality in Maryland established in 1893 by Frederick Douglass’ family). Nixon was also a self-taught architect who designed the Art Deco house in the Palisades neighborhood of DC where Mera’s family lived from 1952 to 1978. Her childhood was filled with family entertaining and playing cards; sewing, knitting and crocheting which she learned from her mother; swimming at Highland Beach, and dancing. Mera took ballet, tap, toe and swing ballet classes, and performed in many recitals. She continued to take lessons into her forties and could always be found on the dance floor.

Mera attended Charles Young Elementary school, Banneker Junior High, and Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School. She received a Bachelor of Science degree from American University in 1958 in Business Administration. Experiencing difficulty finding a job, as many educated African Americans did in this time period, Mera was hired as a salesgirl at Lansburgh Department store, and taught “Fundamentals of Direct Salesmanship” to adults in night school. She applied to Alexander’s department store in New York City, was hired as Head of Stock and promoted to Assistant Buyer in their Bronx store. With her first bonus, she bought a small boat and trailer for her father to enjoy at Highland Beach.

November 11, 1961, Mera married Lester Milward Archambeau, Jr. whom she met as a first grade classmate at Charles Young Elementary School. Their friendship and love affair have spanned 83 years, and from that union three daughters and one son were born: Shellye, Lindy, Niki, and Lester, III (Arch). For 30 years, Lester Jr. worked for IBM in Washington, DC; Boston; New York City; Lexington, Kentucky; Philadelphia; Los Angeles; Connecticut; and in several locations in New Jersey.

The Quest for the Oldest Inhabitants, Incorporated Continues

Early in their union, Mera and Les reached a consensus that they would invest in their family's future by raising "super kids," a goal which they obviously achieved! After Shellye was born, Mera retired from retail to become a fulltime Mom and advocate for education. Mera characterized her marriage as fun, adventurous and sometimes unpredictable!

In every city where the family lived, Mera joined or organized a Mothers' Club to promote quality education for children and provide them field trips and quality immersion experiences. She was a leader in Parent Teacher Associations, awarded the National Congress of Parents and Teachers' Continuing Lifetime Service Award in 1972. Mera was inducted into the Cambridge Who's Who Executive, Professional and Entrepreneurial Registry acknowledging her dedication, leadership, initiative, excellence and continuous support of child development. In Lexington, Kentucky, she recruited volunteer mentors at Dunbar High School to be onsite during all classes to help reverse the school's dropout rate, then the worst in the state. In Wynnefield, PA, Mera organized a pre-school program for three and four-year olds, supported by the Mother's Club of the Wynnefield Recreation Department which she formed and led as President. Following the Watts riots in LA, Mera created a program for Black and white families to exchange their kids for a two-week period in the summer, providing everyone with a new found perspective, and she collected clothes to donate to families affected by the riots to incentivize parents to attend PTA meetings. Mera also lobbied the LA School Board for more classrooms. Mera was an avid Girl Scout leader, organizing the first Girl Scout Camporee in New Milford, Connecticut.

Living in New Jersey presented Mera opportunities to exercise her passion for horses and deepen her commitment to service. The family home in Montville was very close to the Springbrook Stables where in her forties, Mera joined a women's group that was taught to ride and jump by a former Polish Olympian. Mera was "all in," fulfilling her dream of buying a horse, a thoroughbred named Scarborough, while maintaining lifelong friendships with the women in the group. Mera was also a woman deeply committed in her faith. Inspired by her early years raised in Cavalry Episcopal Church in Washington, DC, and her family leaning on the church as a cohesive force in their lives as they moved from place to place, she

The Quest for the Oldest Inhabitants, Incorporated Continues

continued to seek out houses of worship where community service was as central and important as worship. Moving to Freehold, she found that in St. Peter's Episcopal Church. For 30 years, Mera served as the executive director of the Open Door After School program established to assist third, fourth, and fifth graders with homework assignments, especially students who were challenged having English as a second language. During her tenure, Mera expanded the program to include second graders, and she established a scholarship program for high school seniors committed to continuing education who had attended the After School program. Mera knew how to motivate young people, making learning fun, awarding prizes for scholastic accomplishment, and establishing protocols for classroom behavior. It is estimated that 3,500 children matriculated through the After School program before she retired in 2022, and an additional 46 students received books and calculators and benefitted from scholarships awarded to After School program participants. Mera also established a lunch program and provided rides for the elderly and shut-in; taught Sunday School; served as Vestry member, usher, Hospitality Chairman, Bible study Leader, and President of the Women of the Church at St. Peter's. Her dedication to church community continued in the last year while attending Church of the Messiah in Chester.

Family has been a sustaining force in Mera's life and she has been the engine for her family's success. She believed in working hard and playing hard as evidenced by her long-held traditions such as, singing Christmas carols on Christmas Eve, dyeing and hiding eggs on Easter, Fourth of July pool parties, and the family's standing room only New Year's Eve bashes, as well as the marathon game playing of Charades, Taboo, Over the Hill, Double Deck Pinochle, or Continental that would occur on any given day. Mera relented to daughter Niki's request that she write a book so that future generations could learn from her wisdom. The result was "The Art of Parenting Handbook" published in 2011, followed by, "I Remember Poppa," a tribute to her grandfather, and "50 Years and Still Laughing" about her marriage to Lester, which were published in 2012. (All three books can be purchased through Amazon.) Mera also launched Mera's Enterprises and several businesses, including Boot Bags which she designed and made; and "Math Match" which she created to expand the math skills of her After School program

The Quest for the Oldest Inhabitants, Incorporated Continues

students. As part of her creative crafting, she also made candles, quilts and countless numbers of facemasks that she gifted during Covid.

Mera's love was her greatest gift of all. She gave it freely and joyfully. And after limited contact, people could not help but fall in love with her. Her mentoring, counseling and comforting was never ending, as was her energy and love of life. Her capacity to remember the details of every person's life provides testimony to her care and respect for each person. Her Ministry was building relationships, unconditionally, giving love one person at a time. She made her mark in this way, and our world is a better place as a result. We will miss her phone calls and her cards overflowing with wisdom. In all her giving, she has left a blueprint for us, not just a handbook for parenting, but a map for us to follow to happiness and grace. We thank God for Mera Mounsey Archambeau and are eternally grateful for her life and spirit!

She is predeceased by her parents and sisters, Delores Anita Mounsey and Francine Diane Mounsey. Numbered among those who celebrate her and honor her legacy are her husband Lester Millard Archambeau II; children Shellye Archambeau Scott, Lindy Archambeau, Niki Archambeau Brown (Allen), Lester M. Archambeau III (Kathleen); grandchildren Kethlyn Scott, Kheaton Scott, Lester M. Archambeau IV, Kellyn Archambeau, Karsyn Archambeau, Ciara Brown and Cordell Brown; great grandchildren Cannon White, Noel White, and Gaston White; her honorary "other son" Glenn Spoto (Lydia), and their sons Andrew Spoto and William Spoto; and hosts of other relatives and friends.

Compiled 2/28/2026 by William N. Brown, Past-President, AOI of DC