WABASH VALLEY PROFILES

A series of tributes to hometown heroes who have made a difference.

Dr. Martin D. Jenkins

Photo courtesy of the Vigo County Historical Society

An outstanding scholar-athlete at Wiley High School, Martin David Jenkins became a nationally recognized expert on gifted children and the president of Morgan State College.

The only child of David W. and Josephine (Miller) Jenkins was born on Sept. 4, 1904, at 821 South Ninth St. The family soon moved to 501 Gilbert Ave. A civil engineer, David worked as a gauger for the U.S. government. Martin attended Booker T. Washington School before matriculating to Wiley in 1917. An excellent student, Jenkins excelled on the cinders, winning the city and sectional titles in the 100-yard dash and recording area best times in the 50- (5.6), 100- (10.2) and 220-yard (24.0) dashes. Jenkins advanced to the 1921 IHSAA finals in the 100-yard dash but Glenn Gray of Indianapolis Tech won the blue ribbon. Jenkins' teammate Oscar Edwards captured the title in the long jump in 20 feet, 10 1/4 inches.

After graduation, Jenkins enrolled at Howard University in Washington, D.C. to study engineering. Though he received a B.S. degree, he chose not to follow in his father's footsteps, earning an A.B. in education at Indiana State Teachers College in 1931. Meanwhile, he wed Elizabeth Lacy on Sept. 6, 1927. For two years, he was an instructor at Virginia State College. In 1932 he began graduate work in education at Northwestern University under Terre Haute native and ISTC alumnus Dr. Paul A. Witty, who "was a constant source of inspiration." Jenkins secured an M.S. from Northwestern in 1933 and a Ph.D. in 1935, where his dissertation was a socio-psychological study of African-American children of superior intelligence.

After completing his doctorate he became registrar and professor of education at North Carolina A&T and, two years later, dean of instruction at Cheyney State Teachers College in Pennsylvania. In 1938 Dr. Jenkins returned to Howard University for ten years as professor of education, where he continued to expand upon his study of gifted African-Americans. Shortly after his father died in March 1941, his mother joined Martin in the nation's capital. While on the faculty at Howard, Dr. Jenkins accepted a one-year appointment as Senior Specialist with the U.S. Office of Higher Education. A Diplomate in Clinical Psychology, he published more than 80 monographs and scholarly articles. Upon becoming president of Morgan State College in Baltimore in 1948, he was unable to continue his research but frequently spoke about his specialty at academic seminars and conventions. Retiring from Morgan State in 1970 at age 66, he became Director of the Office of Urban Affairs for the American Council of Education until shortly before his death in Washington, D.C. on June 9, 1978.

Highly decorated, Dr. Jenkins received, among other honors, the Andrew White Medal from Loyola College (Md.), Outstanding Civilian Service Medal from the U.S. Department of Army and honorary doctorates from seven universities, including Indiana State University (1969). The Martin David Jenkins Behavioral Science Center at Morgan State University was dedicated in his honor in 1974.

First Financial Bank
Always Close to Home
812-238-6000
EQUAL HOUSING LENDER • MEMBER FDIC

Sign up now for FREE* online banking at
www.first-online.com
EQUAL HOUSING LENDER • MEMBER FDIC
*One-time sign-up fee is $5.95

File name: Dr. Martin D. Jenkins profile Date Published: May 26, 2005