

# Alice Spike

Alice Spike is the widow of Robert Spike, who was senior minister at Judson Memorial Church from 1949 to 1955.

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*When exactly did you live at Judson House?*

From mid-1949 to some time in 1955. Then we moved to 235 East 18th Street (Grace House).

*Did you live on Thompson Street or 81 West Third?*

We lived at 81 West Third until it was condemned in 1950. Then we moved to 237 Thompson Street.

*Who else lived in the building while you were there?*

Betty and Dick Murphy lived below us at 81. We were on the first floor. Dean and Margaret Wright were on the top floor.

At Thompson Street we were on the second floor, the Wrights were on the first floor, the Murphys on the ground floor. Students lived on the top floor. Verne Henderson, an associate minister at Judson, was there toward the end of our stay.

*Do you remember people from the congregation? Would you remember some of their names?*

Evelyn and Bob Poole. Evelyn was Bob's secretary. Bob Poole played Santa for the children every Christmas. Doris Todd was a great member, and Miriam Corbett was very active, too.

*Do you remember any of the students by name?*

Johnny Mui (he liked raw meat). Omar Camay Procter. She was the daughter of Cab Calloway, a very funny and talented girl. Pat White, a very nice girl and active in the church. Dick Murphy was studying medicine; he and Betty were raising the first few of their five little girls.

*Was your son John born while you lived there?*

Yes. He was born at New York Women's Infirmary on November 8, 1951. The great distances we had to walk to the supermarket and Paul's school were memorable. Paul started school in September 1951 at Saint Luke's School. It was about a mile away and a long push with a baby carriage after John came. Paul was four and could not go alone nor come home alone.

The people who lived around us worked or went to school and worked. So we did not have a stream of visitors but had a life much like other city residents.

Dean Wright was co-pastor and minister to students. He was excellent in that work, and Dean and Bob were a great team.

*Do you remember any irritating peculiarities of the building, such as leaky faucets, poor plumbing, or inadequate heating system?*

When we put Paul to bed, at Third Street, we overdressed him as the heat went off at 11 p.m. This too hot/too cold system resulted in pneumonia at age two and again at age four, when we were on Thompson Street.

*Do you remember any incidents you can laugh about now but were not so funny when they took place?*

NO. We laughed at everything that would ever seem funny. Morale was very high.

*Please add anything else you think may be interesting.*

We occasionally saw famous people in ordinary places. One day during the Washington Square Outdoor Art Show I looked out the second-story window and saw Steve Allen and Jayne Meadows looking at the paintings below. A theater group at Judson put on a play in the church sanctuary. One of the actors was Sidney Poitier. The press corps was less numerous and less obnoxious then. At that time New Yorkers respected the privacy of celebrities.

One of Bob's greatest interests was a program of recreation for young people from the neighborhood. They were mostly Italian and Catholic. Many had strayed from ideal behavior at the Catholic programs and had been thrown out. Verne Henderson directed programs of basketball in the church gym, did drug counseling in his rooms, and took kids camping in upstate New York. He was young

and handsome, and the kids liked his programs. Nearby merchants were thrilled and supportive.

Margaret Wright was and is a very fine singer. She sang at church services and special occasions, a tremendous contribution. She also had an excellent career. When she was on television, Judson watched every show. When she had a solo on stage, we all went to opening night. We were spellbound and will never forget her in *As You Like It*. Katherine Hepburn was also in the cast.

Many students participated in church programs and they were always welcome. There was no line between church and students. The staff cared about all of them and were very proud of them.

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**A L I C E   S P I K E**

lives in El Paso, Texas.