



Maude Evelyn Daniel Callen was born in Quincy, Florida, November 8, 1898. She was one of thirteen sisters. Orphaned by the age of six, she was raised in the home of her uncle, Dr. William J. Gunn, a physician, in Tallahassee, Florida. From a young age, Callen often helped her uncle, who encouraged his young niece, eventually inspiring her to pursue a medical career. After high school, she graduated from Florida A & M University and continued her education at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama where she earned a nursing degree.

Following graduation from Tuskegee, she married William Dewer Callen. Two years later in 1923, when the Episcopal Church offered her a temporary medical missionary position in Pineville, Berkeley County South Carolina, they moved. Unlike Florida, Pineville was a remote desolate place surrounded by plantations.

She set up practice. Callen was one of only nine nurse-midwives, at the time, in the area. She operated a community clinic out of her home, miles from any hospital. She provided in-home services to an area known as Hell Hole Swamp, "an area of some 400 square miles veined with muddy roads", serving as 'doctor, dietician, psychologist, bail-goer, and friend' to thousands of desperately poor patients. The residents, many former slaves, lived in tar shacks lit by oil lamps at "the edge of Hell Hole Swamp". This was a still body of water where clouds of mosquitoes would swarm from April to October. In the dead of summer, the dragonflies would arrive, pushing out the mosquitoes, their wings shimmering in the air like transparent crystals. The illusion ended there; Hell Hole had no such gems.

The destitution and abject poverty left most residents (98 percent of whom were Black) of Hell Hole unable to afford phones and basic human needs: clothing, food, and medical care. With no cars or buses, residents relied on wagons or buggies for the 10-mile trip to town. To make matters worse, the nearest hospital was also miles away, and the doctors from Monck's Corner, the county seat, refused to travel to Hell Hole.



It is estimated she delivered between six and eight hundred babies in her years of practice. In addition to providing medical services, Callen also taught women from the community to be midwives. In December 1951, Life magazine published a twelve-page photographic essay of her work, by the celebrated photojournalist, W. Eugene Smith. Smith spent weeks with Callen at her clinic and on her rounds. The photos were visually arresting, both as a haunting record of the time, but also as an ongoing testament to the power of nursing and midwifery to effect social change.

On publication of the photo essay, readers donated more than \$20,000 to support Callen's work in Pineville. As a result, the Maude E. Callen Clinic opened in 1953, which she ran until her retirement from public health duties in 1971. Callen worked as a nurse and midwife in Berkeley County for over 60 years. She was inducted into the South Carolina Hall of Fame, was honored as the outstanding Older South Carolinian by the State Commission on Aging, and was presented the Order of the Palmetto by then-Governor Richard W. Riley.



Callen was also featured in "On the Road with Charles Kuralt" in 1983, and a year later she received the Alexis De Tocqueville Society Award for her 60 years of service to Berkeley County.

Even after her retirement, Callen continued to serve the community through her volunteer work such as volunteer manager of the Senior Citizens Nutrition Council. She dedicated her life to helping people, young and old. The newly built Callen-Lacey Children's Shelter bears her name along with the name of a well-known physician.

Maude E. Callen passed away January 23, 1990.