

# **Press Kit**

## *Tiny Tots in Tiaras and Tuxedos*

The Love, Life and Business Success of Kermit B. Hill

By Francene Mary Diane Hill

# 1. Press Release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Headline: Groundbreaking Biography Reveals Untold Story of African American Woman Who Transformed Early Childhood Education

Subhead: In *Tiny Tots in Tiaras and Tuxedos, The Love, Life, and Business Success of Kermit B. Hill*, author Francene Mary Diane Hill chronicles the legacy of her mother, St. Louis pioneer Kermit B. Hill

Long before the Civil Rights Movement, Kermit B. Hill created an innovative model of early childhood education that blended cultural pride, leadership development, and performing arts. For more than 60 years, Tiny Tot became a cornerstone of its community, empowering generations of children through public speaking, coronations, fashion shows, and graduation ceremonies that instilled confidence and self-assurance from preschool age.

Drawing on 80 personal love letters, hundreds of photographs, original War Department files, and over 100 news clippings, author Francene M. D. Hill weaves together memoir and biography to bring her mother's story to life. Readers follow Kermit from her early career as a probation officer in Arkansas, to guarding wartime secrets at the Pentagon, to becoming a beloved entrepreneur and community leader in St. Louis.

"This is more than my mother's story," says author Francene Hill. "It's a tribute to the countless children, families, and individuals she uplifted through her entrepreneurship and dedication to the community. Her journey shows how one humble woman can transform lives and leave a lasting legacy."

Silver Spring, MD — August 1, 2025— A new biography is shining a light on a remarkable but little-known story in American history. *Tiny Tots in Tiaras and Tuxedos* by Francene Mary Diane Hill recounts the extraordinary life of her mother, Kermit B. Hill, an African American woman who defied both racial and gender barriers to found and lead the pioneering Tiny Tot Nursery School of St. Louis, Inc.

### Publication Details:

- Title: *Tiny Tots in Tiaras and Tuxedos*
- Subtitle: *The Love, Life, and Business Success of Kermit B. Hill*
- Author: Francene Mary Diane Hill
- Formats: Hardcover, Paperback, eBook
- ISBNs:
  - Hardcover: 979-8-9998915-1-8
  - Paperback: 979-8-9998915-0-1
  - eBook: 979-8-9998915-2-5
- Retail Price:

- Hardcover: \$29.95
  - Paperback: \$21.95
  - eBook: \$9.99
- Publisher: Greater Ville Press
  - Website: [greatervillepress.com](http://greatervillepress.com)
  - Phone: 240-424-0778
- Release Date: October 6, 2025 (Expected)
- Availability: Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Bookvault, IngramSpark,

## 2. About the Book

### Long Description

**An untold story of resilience, innovation, and legacy.**

In mid-20th century America—before the Civil Rights era—**Kermit B. Hill** defied racial and gender barriers to become a pioneering entrepreneur and community leader. From her early work as a probation officer in Arkansas, to guarding wartime secrets at the Pentagon, and ultimately founding the **Tiny Tot Nursery School of St. Louis, Inc.**, Kermit built an institution that empowered children and transformed a community for more than 60 years.

*Tiny Tots in Tiaras and Tuxedos* invites readers into the heart of this extraordinary journey. Through **Royal King and Queen Coronations, Cap and Gown Graduations, Fashion Shows, and creative performances**, preschoolers gained confidence, leadership, and public speaking skills that lasted a lifetime.

Told by her daughter, **Francene Mary Diane Hill**, this creative biography blends intimate memoir with meticulously researched history. Drawing on **80 personal love letters, hundreds of photographs, original War Department files, and over 100 news clippings**, Hill creates an authentic portrait that bridges biography and memoir.

This inspiring book celebrates entrepreneurship, family, and the overlooked legacy of African American women in education. Readers will be transported to pivotal moments in American history while witnessing how one woman's determination built a multigenerational institution of empowerment.

👉 If you enjoyed **Becoming** by Michelle Obama, **Educated** by Tara Westover, or the biographies of Walter Isaacson, *Tiny Tots in Tiaras and Tuxedos* will captivate and inspire you.

### Short Description

**The inspiring true story of one woman's determination, resilience, and legacy.**

Before the Civil Rights era, **Kermit B. Hill** broke racial and gender barriers to become a pioneering entrepreneur and beloved community leader. From guarding wartime secrets at the Pentagon to founding the **Tiny Tot Nursery School of St. Louis, Inc.**, her journey spanned six decades of vision and impact.

Through this creative biography, readers will experience:

- **Royal King and Queen Coronations** and **Cap and Gown Graduations**
- **Fashion Shows** and community performances that built confidence and leadership

- The rarely told history of **African American women in education**
- A family's legacy of empowerment, creativity, and service

Blending memoir and history, author **Francene Mary Diane Hill** draws from **80 love letters, hundreds of photographs, War Department files, and news clippings** to craft a moving portrait of her mother's extraordinary life.

👉 If you enjoyed **Becoming, Educated**, or the biographies of **Walter Isaacson**, *Tiny Tots in Tiaras and Tuxedos* will inspire and captivate you.

### 3. About the Author

#### Short Bio

Francene Mary Diane Hill is the daughter of Kermit Hill, founder of the Tiny Tot Nursery School in St. Louis, Missouri. With a B.A. in Psychology from Smith College and an M.S. in Human and Family Studies from Penn State University, Francene draws on decades of personal experience in education and community leadership. She has shared Kermit's story with audiences nationwide, reaching over 360,000 readers through AARP and 2.3 million visitors via the St. Louis Library's digital archives.

#### Long Bio

Francene Mary Diane Hill grew up surrounded by the energy and purpose of the Tiny Tot Nursery School, founded by her mother, Kermit Hill, in 1951 before she was born. Over the decades, Francene worked in every role at Tiny Tot—from teacher's assistant to bus driver—before serving as Board Member and Assistant Director. She holds a B.A. in Psychology from Smith College and an M.S. in Human and Family Studies from Penn State University.

Her passion for storytelling has taken her to open mics, book readings, and book festivals, including The Moth StorySLAM in Washington, DC. She has been featured in Sisters of AARP Magazine, the St. Louis Public Library's Digital Collection, and on multiple stages sharing her mother's inspiring legacy. *Tiny Tots in Tiaras and Tuxedos* is her tribute to Kermit's groundbreaking achievements and enduring community impact.

## 4. Author Photos



## 5. Book Cover Image



## 6. Praise & Reviews

*Your descriptions of objects enhance the narrative. I am able to see the setting, as well as the characters, and can intuit the feelings among the characters.* – Linda M.

*I find your ways of expression and narration exceedingly personal, warm and even intimate. Still you are excellent with the little, finer things in life that take place between people.* – Min Y.

*The quality of the dialogue between Kermit and Augustus is rich and endearing. You definitely brought their characters to life in this chapter.* - Erica B.

## 7. Interview Topics & Sample Questions

Suggested Topics:

- The legacy of African American women in education before the Civil Rights era
- Building a multigenerational institution rooted in culture and creativity
- Preserving family history through memoir and biography
- How early performing arts experiences shape leadership and confidence

Sample Interview Questions:

1. What inspired you to write your mother's story now?
2. How does Kermit B. Hill's story challenge or expand our understanding of women's roles in mid-20th century America?
3. What role did the performing arts play in your mother's educational philosophy?
4. How did your experience growing up at Tiny Tot shape your own life?
5. What was it like working with primary sources like love letters and Pentagon files in telling this story?
6. What lessons can today's educators and parents draw from your mother's approach?
7. How does this story connect to broader themes of race, gender, and opportunity in American history?
8. What do you hope readers feel or do after finishing this book?

## 8. Media Coverage

- Featured in Sisters of AARP Magazine (readership of 360,000+).
- Story archived in the St. Louis Public Library's Digital Collection (viewed by over 2.3 million visitors).
- Author appearances at storytelling events including The Moth StorySLAM in Washington, DC.
- Front Page Story in Greater Olney News (reaches over 20,000 homes and businesses and 42,000 people in area)

## 9. Events & Availability

Author, Francene Mary Diane Hill is available for book launch events, speaking engagements, author panels, and community festival appearances as schedule permits.

## 10. Contact Information

For interviews, review copies, event invitations, or media inquiries, please contact:

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