

Press Kit

Tiny Tots in Tiaras and Tuxedos

The Life, Love, 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 and Guarded Wartime Secrets at the Pentagon

Subhead:

In *Tiny Tots in Tiaras and Tuxedos: The Life, Love, and Business Success of Kermit B. Hill*, author Francene Mary Diane Hill chronicles the legacy of her mother, St. Louis pioneer Kermit B. Hill—praised by Kirkus Reviews as “an accessible, valuable addition to the histories of Black businesswomen in America.”

Silver Spring, MD — December 18, 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.

Kirkus Reviews calls the book “an engaging” work that “often reads like a novel,” situating one woman’s life within “the larger context of 20th-century Black history.” Long before the Civil Rights Movement, Kermit B. Hill created an innovative model of early childhood education that blended cultural pride, leadership development, and the performing arts.

For more than 60 years, Tiny Tot Nursery School became a cornerstone of Black life in St. Louis. Its signature King and Queen Coronation—designed, as Hill writes, to “create a world where young Black children could be kings and queens”—grew into a major community event that celebrated Black beauty, dignity, and self-confidence through public speaking, coronations, fashion shows, and graduation ceremonies beginning at the preschool level.

Drawing on 80 personal love letters, hundreds of photographs, original War Department files, and more than 100 news clippings, Hill weaves memoir, biography, and historical narrative into what Kirkus Reviews describes as “an important addition to the literature on mid-20th-century Black women entrepreneurs,” enriched by “a wealth of photographs, news clippings, handwritten letters, and other visual elements.”

Readers follow Kermit B. Hill from her early career as a probation officer in Arkansas, to guarding wartime secrets at the Pentagon, to becoming a trusted educator and community leader in St. Louis—one whose business, Kirkus notes, “united her community behind notions of Black beauty and pride.”

“This is more than my mother’s story,” says author Francene Hill. “It’s a tribute to the children, families, and community members whose lives she touched. My hope is that readers see how one woman—working quietly, deliberately, and with love—can shape generations and leave a lasting legacy.”

Publication Details:

- Title: *Tiny Tots in Tiaras and Tuxedos*
- Subtitle: The Life, Love, and Business Success of Kermit B. Hill
- Author: Francene Mary Diane Hill
- Formats: Hardcover, Paperback, eBook
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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*, *Hidden Figures*, or *Walk Through Fire*, *Tiny Tots in Tiaras and Tuxedos* will inspire and captivate 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*, *Hidden Figures*, or *Walk Through Fire*, *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

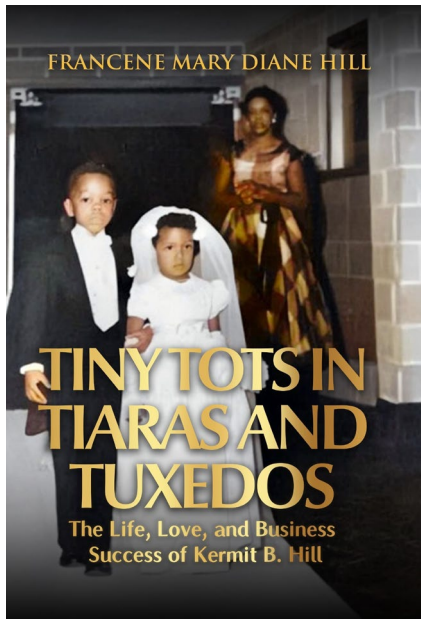
Francene Mary Diane Hill grew up surrounded by the energy and purpose of the Tiny Tot Nursery School, founded by her mother, Kermit Hill, in 1951 before she was born. Over the decades, Francene worked in every role at Tiny Tot—from teacher's assistant to bus driver—before serving as Board Member and 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 (Draft)



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 Moore, *Reaching for Resilience*

Tiny Tots in Tiaras and Tuxedos offers a captivating portrait of Kermit B. Hill, an African American pioneer whose post-World War II journey blends public service, resilience, and entrepreneurial determination. Through her daughter, her path from probation officer to Pentagon insider to celebrated nursery-school founder is told with warmth and inspiring clarity.

— W.T. Door

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.

– William Y.

Your story *Tiny Tots in Tiaras and Tuxedos* captured me from the very beginning. What stood out most was how you turned everyday family life into something so vivid and memorable. I loved the detail of Kermit juggling her baby, husband, and housework while still dreaming about a piano; it showed both her determination and her humanity.

— Amy Chan Zhou, author of *Flowing with the Pearl River*

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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