

# Danne Smith Mathis, MPW, CF APMP

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## **In the Beginning**

Danne Smith Mathis began her writing career at the early age of nine when she kept a poetic journal of her memorable family experiences.

## **College Years... Finding Her Voice**

During her journey as a creative writing major, Danne faced a seemingly daunting challenge while at Carnegie Mellon University, a predominantly white research institution: How to maintain her voice as a Black writer? Then, Danne had the unique fortune of exposure to the work of the late Pulitzer Prize-winning playwright, August Wilson, when she began to attend the productions of the Kuntu Repertory Theatre at the University of Pittsburgh. During this pivotal time of preparation for her professional writing career, the late Rob Penny bought Wilson's play "Homecoming" to a theater production. Shortly thereafter, Wilson and Penny began to mentor Danne weekly after she began to attend the Kuntu Writers' Workshop where Danne found a collaboration haven with other African-American writers. Years later, Danne returned to Carnegie Mellon at the request of the leadership of the Carnegie Mellon Black Alumni Association (CMBAA), to write and produce the documentary: "Decades in Black: The 100-Year History of the Black Student at Carnegie Mellon University (1900-2000)" which premiered as part of the university's 2001 Centennial celebration.

## **Graduate Education and Academia**

After graduation from the University of Southern California's Master's in Professional Writing (MPW) program, Danne served as an adjunct faculty instructor of English at Essex County College (Newark, NJ) and Clayton State University (Morrow, GA) where her unique method of instructional delivery grabbed the undivided attention of traditional and non-traditional students in the areas of remedial writing, composition, research writing, technical and speech writing, and business communications.

## **Professional Years: Finding Her Way to Corporate America**

As the Assistant to the President of the Washington Association of Television and Children (W.A.T.C.H.), Danne edited the testimony of the association's President on "The Negative Effects of Sugared-Cereal Commercials on Children," which was delivered to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and became the platform for the watch group's demand for increased airing of children's educational programming in the nation's capital. After this testimony and a decisive emergency meeting with executives of the ABC affiliate in Washington, DC, WJLA-TV, Danne became the group's on-air television representative and wrote an unedited script on upcoming children's television programs that aired weekly as part of the "A.M. Washington," show.

Since then, Danne has worked in various capacities within corporate America, including Special Assistant to the CEO/President of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of New Jersey, Inc. where she was responsible for special projects, systems implementations, executive reporting, technical writing/editing, benefits utilization analysis, and the management of the sales support unit. She also held the following positions: Rapid Response Proposal Writer (Northrop Grumman Corporation-Atlanta, GA); Manager of Proposals & RFPs (Premier Inc.,-Charlotte, NC); Proposal Development Manager-Business Development (Faneuil, Inc.-Hampton, VA); and Senior Proposal Writer and Communications Specialist (Redflex Traffic Systems, Inc. -Glendale, AZ). Danne holds the Foundation Certification (CF) from the Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP).

As a writing consultant, Danne incorporated her influence as the protégé of Barbara Kraft and Anais Nin when she served as the researcher/biographer for Oscar L. Harris, Sr., FAIA, during collaboration on his autobiography entitled *Oscar: The Memoir of a Master Architect*. She participated as the consulting editor for eight-time Mr. Olympia, Lee Haney, on his publication, *Fit at Any Age* and, as the writing consultant and speechwriter for Ron Freeman U.S. Olympic gold and bronze medalist from the infamous 1968 US Olympic track and field team (Mexico City, 1968).

## **Present Day**

Danne has co-authored the books "*Shut 'Em Down: Black Women, Racism and Corporate America*," a #1 Amazon bestseller in the Labor and Industrial Economics Relations category, and "*Survivors: Celebrating Life Beyond Domestic Violence*," a book winner in the category of "Body, Mind and Spirit" by the New Mexico Book Association (O'Tahirah Films, LLC, Publisher).

## **Home Life**

A former homeschool educator, Danne is the mother of three adult children: Nicole Mathis (US Army and graduate of Johnson & Wales University); James P. Mathis (Ph.D., Applied Physics, University of Michigan); and David Mathis (Registered Nurse). She has one grandchild, Aiden James-David Mathis.

An avid football fan and speed skater, Danne is the first of three daughters of the late Dr. J. Harry Smith, who was a Tuskegee Airman (477th Bombardment Group), the first Black to become president of any college or university in the state of New Jersey and the first Black to attend the Georgetown University School of Law. Her mother, the late Marilyn H. Smith, was not only a former elementary school teacher, but also, and most importantly, the woman who taught her the art of penmanship and letter writing.