

Chronicle Profile

She's a working mother of nine

By **AUDREY WILLIAMS**
Chronicle Staff Writer

For a woman 58 years old who reared nine children and periodically helps out with the nine grandchildren, Willie Mae Grace still has the sense of style and flair she had when she married James Grace 39 years ago.

"It was a lot of hard work, and with nine children you don't have much time to sit down," says Grace, who says her youthfulness hasn't been helped along by any special regimen or health spas. "I try to keep myself up because my husband always told me not to go anywhere if I didn't look as good as anyone else there or better."

Her lovely home on Cameron Avenue is set off by her latest collection craze of fans, one of which she boasts is 60 years old.

"Before my husband and I got married, he said he wanted nine boys," Grace says. "We didn't have all boys, but we had all nine."

It wasn't until the youngest child went off to college at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill two years ago that Grace took on her very first job. She now works in the housekeeping department at Wake Forest University.

"I decided to go to work when we had three kids in college at one time," she says. "It was time for me to get out and help."

When Grace married her husband, James, her ambition was to become a beautician. But because he wanted her to stay at home and raise their family, she never pursued the idea and there are no regrets, she says.

"Even though I stayed at home and raised my children," she says, "I never really got into a lot of social activities."

"Raising a family was what I was geared for, and I know I was needed more at home rather than in social clubs," she says.

Grace, whose father died when she was 14 and her mother three years later, may seem a bit behind the times when it comes to women's liberation, but she says she's never felt confined being a mother and a housewife.

"I've always had my freedom to do whatever I wanted to do," she says, "but I chose to raise a family."

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-- Willie Mae Grace

After all of the Grace children have completed their education, she says she will probably spend her time doing more volunteer work.

Most of her past volunteer work has included the parent-teachers associations and church work as a member of Zion Hill Baptist Church, where she serves as co-chairperson of the Trustees' Wives and as a member of the Women's Missionary.

Looking at the way times have changed, Grace says she doesn't believe she could have brought up so many children today.

"No, I don't think I could've raised that many children today," she says, "especially with the way



Raising nine children, keeping house and being a good wife all at the same time, may seem restrictive to some people, but Willie Mae Grace says she's content with the choice she made 39 years ago when she was only 18 (photo by James Parker).

the economy is. But in raising children, it's basically knowing what you have to do."

What Grace did was make sure her family got all the love and care they needed, as well as helping them build confidence in themselves. One of her sons, Michael Grace, is a practicing attorney, while the rest

of her children have launched successful careers of their own or are raising families.

"I think I've been a good mother," says Grace, "because I've tried to rear my children to be good citizens, be independent and confident, and we gave them a strong religious background, also."

Willoughby gets a ride

Marqui Willoughby, a sixth-grader, recently arrived at Wadesboro Middle School in style in Sky 3 helicopter from television station WBTV in Charlotte.

Sky 3 is the name which Marqui suggested in the station's name contest. In addition to the helicopter ride, Marqui was awarded a color TV and tickets to Winterfest at Carowinds.

Marqui is the son of Jesse and Marvelle (Wilson) Willoughby of Wadesboro. Mr. Willoughby is a high school-social science teacher and owns and operates a taxi company. Mrs. Willoughby is a high school English teacher and is a member of the Wadesboro City Planning Board.

Marqui is the grandson of the late Rev. W. Edward Wilson, past presiding elder of the Winston-Salem CME church, and Mrs. Mattie M. Wilson of Airport Road in Winston-Salem. He attends Hanes Memorial CME Church and attributes parts of his ambitious drive and positive guidance to his parents, family members, his pastor, Dr. Anzo Montgomery; his Sunday School teacher, Johnny Hampton; his physician, Dr. Charlie B. Kennedy; his musical consultant, Rudolph Boone and his many teachers.

The helicopter ride was not Marqui's first encounter with the news media. He has also been special guest of Frank Deal



Marqui Willoughby checks out the master controls inside a helicopter that he christened for WBTV Channel 3.

of WGHP-TV Channel 8 in High Point. He has also interviewed Mike McKoy of

WBTV-Channel 3 in Charlotte. He was given a complete tour of Channel 3's Jefferson Pilot's Broadcasting Center.

Marqui is an honor student and a member of the academically gifted and talented class, and is active in civic affairs. He formulated and chaired the Junior Catus (citizens against toxic waste) organization in his county.

He also attended the Academically Gifted Science and Math Institute at Catawba College last year.

Marqui wants to be a journalist, meteorologist or a newscaster.

Boy Scouts celebrate 74th anniversary

On Feb. 8, the Boy Scouts of America celebrated its 74th anniversary. Boy Scouts numbers are growing again after a sharp decline during the 70s.

The Scouts say they're especially proud of the phenomenal growth of the senior coeducational program for high school and college youth.

The organization is also continuing to expand its horizons, reaching out to persons it didn't specifically pinpoint before.

They are also expanding their programs to include groups for the handicap-

ped, a plunge into the inner city, a new tiger cub program for 7-year-old boys, a career awareness program to expose high school age youth into future career paths, a program aimed at latch-key children (male and female), and an appeal to teen-age women, who comprise more than 40 percent of exploring membership.

In just one year, the Boy Scouts of America will be celebrating its Diamond Jubilee. The purpose of scouting is to reach young people and guide them toward good citizenship, sound character and strong bodies.

Today the organization is taking time to pause and salute the more than one million adult volunteers who make the whole program possible: the Cub Scout leaders, the scoutmasters, the exploring advisors, the merit badge counselors, the committeemen and women, and those who serve in a wealth of leadership roles on local, area, regional and national levels. Tagged for thanks, too, are the many "unregistered volunteers" and not the least of whom are spouses.

Over 10,000 young people and another 3,500

adults were registered in the Old Hickory Council during 1983. They are organized into 105 Cub Scout packs, 134 Boy Scout troops and 39 explorer posts. The year-end membership in the council was the fifth largest ever and represents the most youth served since 1967.

As the Boy Scouts of America goes about its business, much of it behind the scenes and out of the public eye, the group says it hopes others will consider volunteering their services as leaders or joining the movement as youngsters and young adults.

Cunningham awarded

Tonja Cunningham has been named a 1984 United States National Award winner in the mathematics category by the United States Achievement Academy.

The Academy recognizes less than 10 percent of all American high school students.

Tonja, who attends Parkland Senior High

School, was nominated for this national award by Mrs. Barbara Butler, Algebra III and geometry teacher at Parkland. Tonja will appear in the United States Achievement Academy Official Yearbook.

She is the daughter of Doris Cunningham and the goddaughter of Melvin and Carolyn Crump.

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