

Chronicle Profile

She's dedicated her life to children

By AUDREY L. WILLIAMS
Chronicle Staff Writer

If Mama Wright thinks a young boy is a bit too timid, she'll make him put up his dukes and fight her. If a young girl isn't acting like a lady, Mama Wright pulls her aside and tells her about the respect "only ladies get."

Queen "Mama" Wright, or "Grandma" as the little ones affectionately call her, is the assistant recreation director at Reynolds Park Recreation Center. And though it's not a part of her job title -- she's that mother away from home, too.

Everyone one calls the active 59-year-old mother of 11 children "Mama," even her boss, former Harlem Globetrotters basketball player Robert Little and the center's director.

A native of Winston-Salem, Wright, a genuine lover of people, with youth being first on her list, can hardly be seated for five minutes before her assistance is needed on game rules or to mediate a disagreement. If she wants the girls to know the right way to jump rope, she takes over. If a youngster is having difficulty with a jump shot, she shows him how it's done.

"I love children," says Wright. "I love all children and I always wanted a large family."

And family is what she has. In 20 years she has had over 20 foster children in her home, in addition to her own 10 children and a daughter she legally adopted.

"If I had the funds," she says, "I'd take in every child nobody wanted."

A 15-year-old foster son now lives with her and she talks of her hopes to win custody of his twin brother.

Wright finds it difficult to talk about the alienation she suffered as a child because of her Indian and Spanish heritage. But in order to explain her love for

children, she puts aside the pain she's harbored for so many years.

"My childhood was a very unpleasant one," says Wright. "It was sad. The children would throw rocks at me, call me names, pull my hair and tear my clothes off."

The name calling and the badgering from neighborhood children and classmates didn't end there for Wright, she says. It continued even through high school. She had no friends, she says, and the majority of her free time was spent with the grandmother who raised her and other adults.

When Wright, a former first-grade teacher at the Seventh Day Adventist School in High Point, was asked to help keep order at the Martin Luther King Recreation Center while the director was away, it was soon discovered that she was a natural with children. Even the ones considered troublemakers and uncontrollable humbled in her presence, she says. And the Bible-quoting Wright, whose husband, Elder Lonnie Wright, is the former pastor of Baldwin's Chapel Seventh Day Adventist Church in High Point, has been put to the test on many occasions.

Before arriving at Reynolds Park two years ago, Wright had held her ground and gained the respect and admiration of the children and parents as director of recreation at the North Hills Recreation Center.

"They (the children) ran all the other directors off before I came," she says. "I told them when I got there if I left, there would be no more recreation center."

"When they would try to break in the center, 'I'd call the police and then I go get 'em. When the dope came in, I called the boys in my office that I knew were selling it and I told them if they sold that stuff



"Mama" Wright has the magic formula for Ron Gregg's timidity: "Put up your dukes" (photo by James Parker).

to my children or the ones I had myself, they wouldn't have to worry about the law -- I'd get 'em myself."

That was the end of drug peddling at the North Hills center.

After realizing that many of the kids in the neighborhood had no other outlets other than drugs or crime, she started pulling in bands, two of which a son and daughter of hers sang in.

"I gave them something to look forward to," says Wright. "I knew I was going to have to give them

something and the kids that people called the worse ones, I'd put them in charge."

Calling her "Mama" isn't just the name that everyone calls Wright. It goes beyond that. Every child in the Reynolds Park center has had to deal with her one way or another. She's kept hours as late as 7 a.m. in the morning entertaining children with cards, bingo or just having rap sessions in her home.

Despite what may seem an adult becoming too involved, Mama Wright doesn't think so. As a matter of fact, it's the childhood she never had.



Mrs. Melonie Moultry Lowe

Dr. John A. Feemster honored

Dr. John A. Feemster, a prominent Detroit surgeon, was recently honored by the Michigan State House of Representatives for his outstanding leadership, contributions and achievements in the medical profession. Feemster, a graduate of Atkins High School, has practiced in Detroit since 1974.

Feemster, his wife, children, parents, two sisters and several close

friends were the guests of Rep. Matthew McNeely, speaker protem of the Michigan House of Representatives at a luncheon where Rep. McNeely presented Dr. Feemster a framed copy of a "Resolution of Tribute" honoring him.

During the luncheon, Michigan Gov. Ray Blanchard paid a special visit to meet and congratulate Feemster. Other

distinguished guests present included Senator Jackie Vaughn, Mr. David Kelly, public relations officer of the Michigan Medical Society. Rep. McNeely and Senator Vaughn are black members of the Michigan State Legislature.

Following the luncheon, Feemster, accompanied by his family and friends, was given special recognition during the afternoon session of the Michigan House



Dr. John A. Feemster of Representatives at Lansing, Mich. Feemster is the son of Please see page A8

Moultry and Lowe wed

Melonie Ruth Moultry of Winston-Salem and Sidney Rochell Lowe of Raleigh were married Saturday, June 23, at a 3 p.m. ceremony at Mount Zion Baptist Church, with the Reverends Kelly O.P. Goodwin and Connie G. Robinson officiating.

The bride, a 1980 graduate of East Forsyth Senior High School and a 1984 graduate of North Carolina State University, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Calvin J. Moultry of 836 Rankin St.

The groom is the son of Mr. and Mrs. James Lowe of Alexandria, Va. Lowe, who was starting point guard for the North Carolina State Wolfpack team for four years and led the team to the NCAA Championship, is a member of the Indiana Pacers basketball team in Indianapolis, Ind.

Given in marriage by her father, Moultry had her sister, Miss Ganelle GiGi Moultry of Winston-Salem, as the maid of honor.

Bridesmaids were Misses Erica Brown, Demetra Miller, Aileen Oliver, Eleanor Phillips, Mary Phillips, Lynn Stevenson, Princess Watson, Debra Welch and Tonya Witherspoon, all of Winston-Salem. Bridesmaids from out-of-town included Misses Vickie Weaver and Michelle Wilson of Durham, Misses Prencessa Michens and Ava Scott of Atlanta, Ga., Miss Bonita Green of Greensboro, Miss Audrey Horton of Scotch

Plains, N.J., Misses Den-niese Bruce and Gloria Hines, both of Raleigh, Miss Kim Hunt of Roxboro and Miss Lorise White of Washington, D.C.

The best man was Derek Whittenburg of Glenarden, Md.

Groomsmen were the groom's brothers, Edwin Lowe, and James Lowe, Robert Ager, all of Washington, D.C., Clyde Austin, Donald Bruce Jr. and Dwayne Green, both of Raleigh, Archibald Banks III of Reidsville, Lorenzo Charles of Brooklyn, N.Y., Johnny Gentry and William Gentry of Shelby Gary

Grace and Lamar Landrum, both of Winston-Salem, the groom's brother, Willie Gwyn Jr. of Alexandria, Va., Darryl Harris of Charlotte, Charles Logan of Newark, N.J., and the groom's nephew, Kenny Lowe of Alexandria, Va.

Other ushers were Cozell McQueen of Bennettsville, S.C., Reginald Moore of Ann Arbor, Mich., Stacey Spencer of Wilmington and the bride's brother, Robert Moultry.

Flower girls were Miss Tramaine Brown of Greensboro and Miss Tracy Phillips of Dayton, Ohio.

Ring bearers were William Slaughter of Washington, D.C. and James Moore of Winston-Salem.

The couple will make their home in Raleigh, until they move to Indianapolis in September.

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