

# Microsurgery gives child chance to hold on

Patrice Woodruff is one 8-year-old who has much to look forward to.

She is awaiting with great anticipation the start of third grade at Kimberley Park Elementary Alternative School this fall. And she can hardly wait to once more play hide-and-seek with her 2-year-old brother, B.J., and to sing with a group called "Love" at the Winston Lake YMCA.

But what she anticipates more than anything else now is that soon, for the first time in her life, she'll be able to firmly grasp and hold things with her right hand.

Patrice, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Woodruff, went home from Baptist Hospital after undergoing microsurgery to implant a thumb on her right hand. The thumb was fashioned from part of the big toe of her right foot.

According to Dr. Andrew Koman, a member of the team which performed the toe-to-hand transfer on July 31, Patrice was born with all or part of the fingers on her right hand missing except for the little finger. With the addition of the thumb, she will have the ability to grasp and firmly hold items between her thumb and little finger.

Her missing fingers were the result of a birth defect called constricting band syndrome, in which tissue which originally was part of the amniotic sac surrounding the fetus wraps around and constricts portions of the unborn infant. The constriction, which most often affects the fingers or toes, can cause amputation long before the baby is born.

Birth defect specialists at the Bowman Gray/Baptist Hospital Medical Center calculate that the syndrome, which is not genetic,

affects about one infant for every 5,000 live births.

Mrs. Woodruff said of her daughter, "To Patrice, the problem with her right hand hasn't been a handicap. We never told her that she was handicapped. We wanted her to adjust in her own way and she did. She was putting on her own clothes when she was just 2 years old."

One concern Patrice's parents have is that the surgery on the child's foot might impair her ability to dance. She is involved in jazz, ballet and tap dancing.

But, Koman explains, because the big toe on Patrice's left foot is shorter than normal, taking part of the big toe on the right foot to fashion a thumb should not adversely affect the function or appearance of her right foot.

He explains that while digit transplants are not new, it is

somewhat unusual to perform one on a child and especially on a child who was born with the syndrome.

"Toe-to-hand transfer is considered a complex and difficult operation," he explained. The medical center here is one of fewer than 30 centers in the nation which routinely do that type of surgery.

The success of Patrice's surgery is partially due to the experience the medical center has in caring for so many patients who need microsurgery, Koman said.

Microsurgery is the use of a microscope to aid in repairing delicate nerves, blood vessels and other tissues. A child Patrice's size has vessels, nerves and other tissue only 60 to 70 percent the size of an adult's.

Microsurgery is used in nine surgical sections at the medical

center by various microsurgery teams. Doctors at the center perform transplantations both on patients like Patrice, who have a congenital problem, and on trauma victims who require reimplantation of amputated digits and arms.

Though the actual digit transplantation requires time-consuming and exacting microsurgery, Koman said that the success of such a procedure is largely determined by how well the limb is prepared before transplantation and how well the site where the limb came from is repaired.

Without that repair on Patrice's right foot, the foot could hurt and walking could be impaired. "When doing surgery like this, you don't want to upset the dynamic balance of the foot," Koman said.



## Reaching Out

Members of the Black Volunteer Recruitment Task Force for Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Forsyth County, left to right, are: Dr. Myrna Williams, Elaine Pitt, chairman, Jim Conrad, Betty Hanes, Bert Brisard and Honey Noah. The group is looking for 200 black volunteers for the program by the end of August (photo by Art Blue).

## Elaine Cole has birthday gathering

Mrs. Elaine Cole of 1405 Patterson Ave. celebrated her birthday on Friday, Aug. 23. She was joined by many friends who came from as far away as Yonkers, N.Y.

Friends and loved ones enjoyed good food and company during Mrs. Cole's birthday gathering.

Guests at the birthday celebration included: Mrs. Julie Richardson of Yonkers, Mrs. Lillie Massey, Barbara Watts, Richard Cheek, Charles Whitaker, Robert Smith, Haywood Watts, Roosevelt Nelson, all of High Point, Mrs. Mattie Harris, Shiley Davis, Raymond Johnson, Leon Campbell, all of Greensboro, Mrs. Sedalia Mullins, Marie Davis and Kenneth Price, all of Reidsville.

Hostesses for the birthday gathering were: Mrs. Rochelle Pinson, Lacy Dillard, Dorothy Murray, Mary Cockerham, Mary Cutherell and Ernestine Cremedy.

Hosts for the party were: James Webster, Robert Smith, Haywood Watts and Roosevelt Nelson.

## Associated Artists announces winners

The Juried Exhibition for the Photographic Arts will award \$10,000 in prizes and announce the winners for National Aperture '85 on Thursday, Aug. 29, at 7 p.m. in Winston Square. Photographers from 30 states will receive their awards and preview the exhibition.

Winners will be selected from 403 works by 233 artists representing 30 states.

National Aperture '85 is co-sponsored by Associated Artists Inc., The Arts Council Inc., The North Carolina Arts Council and The Grassroots Arts Bill.

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