

Helping The 'Blind' See Is Main Goal Of The Low Vision Program

By Kathy Bartlett
CHAPEL HILL—Alice Adams is legally blind, but she can read a newspaper.

So many other "blind" people if they have prescribed one of the many specialized lens systems developed by visual scientists. In fact, about 70 per cent of people labeled legally blind have some vision that can be substantially improved by corrective aids.

Low vision is the focus of a specialized eye clinic operated by Dr. Howard Lewis, clinical assistant professor in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine, and located in N.C. Memorial Hospital.

Each week, Lewis examines patients whose vision cannot be improved by medical or surgical means or by conventional eyeglasses. His job is to evaluate the extent of their vision impairment and determine what type of low vision optical system and rehabilitation would be most appropriate.

"We never say die, no matter how low a person's vision is," Lewis said. "Even a patient whose vision is as low as 20/1,000 often can read small-column newsprint with a microscope lens."

Alice Adams is one of Lewis' success stories. Adams, a retired Army major from Southern Pines, came to Lewis after she began losing her sight in 1968 because of a rare retinal disorder called angiod streaks. She has no sight in her left eye but has been fitted with a telescopic lens, which enables her to make the most of the vision remaining in her right eye.

"The principal thing I wanted to be able to do was read," Adams said, "but I didn't want to get into Braille or talking books."

In addition to telescopic spectacles, Lewis fitted

Adams with a microscopic reading lens that had its own built-in illumination system. When her vision deteriorated beyond these capabilities, he introduced her to a video magnification system which could enlarge reading material up to 64 times.

"We try to determine what goals are most important to each patient," Lewis said. "By far, the most common need is to be able to read small-column newsprint."

Low vision patients can suffer from a wide variety of eye disorders including tunnel vision, extremely hazy vision, night blindness and disorders that block out whole portions of the visual field. The most common devices used to correct these problems are microscopic lenses, telescopic lenses, high magnification bifocals, video magnification and specialized filters.

Cynthia Mabe, a 28-year-old mother from Monroe, uses three different devices to maximize her vision. Lewis fitted her with prismatic, high magnification reading glasses, a hand-held telescope and specialized filters.

"It's been fabulous," Mabe said. "I never thought I'd be able to see like this again. Now I can help my little girl with her reading."

Mabe's visual aids cost \$285 and were a Valentine's Day present from her family. She hopes the Lion's Club will help her purchase a pair of astronomical telescopes mounted on eyeglasses, which will improve her vision twice as much.

Motivation can be the key difference between success and failure in adapting to low vision devices, Lewis explained. Adams was warned that her lenses would not be attractive and, in fact, she has found that they frequently scare young children. But being able to recognize faces and dress herself is

much more important than her appearance. In addition, reading with a low vision aid often requires a person to look at one word, sometimes even one syllable, at a time.

"You have to have an untold amount of patience," explained Elizabeth Wilson, one of Lewis' patients from Chapel Hill. "I feel like a child just learning how to pronounce words, but at least now I can look up telephone numbers and read letters and the bank statement."

Low vision has been around as a medical specialty for 20 years, but the clinic at N.C. Memorial is the first for a hospital in the state. Lewis, an optometrist, has held his faculty position in the School of Medicine's department of ophthalmology for three years.

"Newer surgical techniques are preserving vision in eyes that are not too long ago would have been lost," Lewis explained. "These patients, however, are often left with markedly reduced vision, which prevents them from performing tasks that the normally seeing person takes for granted."

"Although reduced vision is not as disabling to patients as blindness, it must be dealt with if these people are to have a chance to be useful, productive human beings. Senior citizens may become much less a burden on society if they are able to be independent, while in children, a successful education may depend upon access to low vision optical assistance."

"My whole life has turned around," Adams wrote to Lewis using her new video magnification systems. "If it had not been for you, through the years, my whole outlook would have been most gloomy."



point of view

BY BILL NIXON

Editor's note: Nixon, an Edenton native, is vice-president of Parker Brothers Newspapers of Asheville. His column appears weekly in a number of that group's publications.

be no real answer that will satisfy the question of "Why?"

At times like these, it seems we usually turn to a strength much greater than that offered by mortal man. Regardless of our religious beliefs, we seem to seek the guidance and direction of one more powerful than ourselves.

I am reminded of an event in my life several years ago. Our family suffered a tragedy of our own when an 18-month-old niece died of leukemia. We had the same questions asked by most in such situations. While there could be little satisfaction in the words of friends and relatives, the reasoning for her death as given by the minister during the funeral service has remained with me all these years.

Regardless, as mentioned earlier, what our religious beliefs might be, most of us have hopes of a life somewhere that will be better than the one we know on this earth. We are taught that there is a place for us after death that is more beautiful than any thing or place we have ever known. A place where there is no sadness or sorrow or pain or tragedy. A place where goodness reigns and all beings will live together forever and ever in peace and happiness.

To many, this place is known as Heaven. And if Heaven is to be the perfect place to exist in eternity, then there must be children. To be sure, the sound of a child's laughter is one of the most beautiful sounds ever. In order to make Heaven the place it is described, there must be children. So God, in His special way, selects cer-

tain children to join Him there to make it complete. This is an explanation I can believe in.

A slight deformity in life should not be considered a disgrace or a tragedy. Often those that may be handicapped physically will develop and display greater awareness and abilities in life than those of us that are considered normal by our standards. In his book, the (Wisdom of Gibran), the author tells us, "Not all of us are enabled to see with our inner eyes the great depths of life, and it is cruel to demand that the weak-sighted see the dim and the far."

To the blind child goes my hopes that sight can be restored. But should such not be so, then to the parents goes an offer of encouragement and a wish of strength in facing the years ahead. And last, a reminder that greatness does not come from physical strength, but from the depths of the heart. Have you hugged your child today?

General Assembly Session Convened

IN SESSION...The budget-making edition of North Carolina's General Assembly convened last week.

The first bill to run the gamut and become law was House Bill 3, making the birthday of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. a recognized state holiday. Quick passage was required by the House on Thursday and the Senate on Friday if the bill was to be law for King's birthday on Saturday, January 15th.

The day was designated as a holiday, although a number of lawmakers required

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An unused swing set can turn a backyard into an eyesore... unless you have flower baskets from the frame, attach a bird feeder to the overhead bar and plant climbing vines to trail up the legs. A thing of beauty!

HERITAGE REALTY

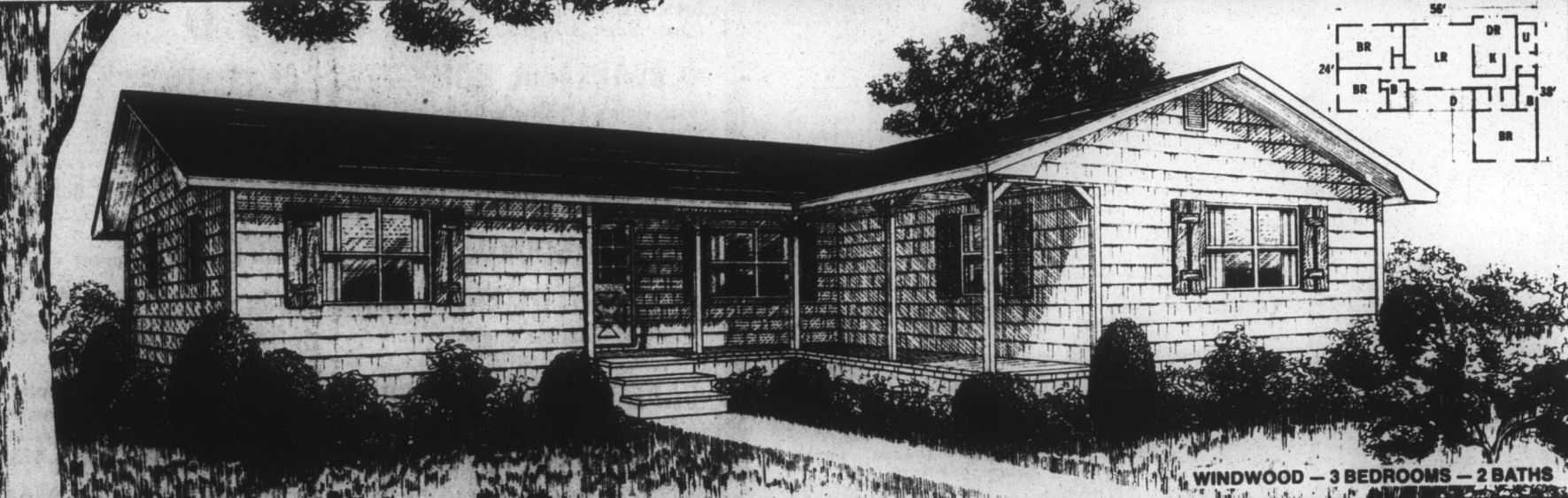
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NEW LISTINGS

- 2 BEDROOM HOME** — In town, L.R. w/fireplace, bath, eat-in-kitchen, screened porch, fenced in back yard.....\$30,000.
- INVESTMENT PROPERTY**—3 Lots, 2 mobile homes, partially furnished.....\$16,500.
- MEXICO RD.** — Attractive brick ranch, featuring 3 Bedrooms, 2 baths, L.R. w/fireplace, Kit., Den, Garage, fenced yard.....\$49,900.
- WATERFRONT**—Seven wooded acres on the Chowan River, secluded with tremendous view of the water.
- FIVE ACRES** — On the Base Rd., perfect for small business or home site.
- IN TOWN**—Gracious two-story home in the historic district, beautifully restored.
- MEXICO RD.** — Immaculate brick ranch, 3 BR., 2 baths, L.R., D.R. Kitchen combo, sun porch, well landscaped yard.
- SPACIOUS COUNTRY HOME**—Lovely 1½ story with privacy, 4 Bedrooms, 4 baths, L.R., Great Room w/fireplace, util. Rm., recreation room, 2 car Garage - assumable loan at 9%, dual heat pumps.....\$92,000.
- CHARMING 1 YEAR OLD HOME** — 3 bedrooms, 2 baths, large family room, utility room, workshop. Central heat and air.....\$35,000.
- IN THE COUNTRY**—2 bedroom home on an acre of land, workshop. Central heat & air.....\$32,000.
- EDEN STREET** — Lovely brick ranch, 4 BR., den w/fireplace, L.R., kitchen, 2 full baths.....\$68,900.
- NEAR HANCOCK STATION**—Home or mobile home sites. 5 acre tract.....\$3,700.
- 6 acre tract**.....\$5,000.
- ARROWHEAD BEACH**—New 2 bedroom house on 2 lots.....\$27,500.
- ARROWHEAD BEACH**—Attractive 3 bedroom home. living room, dining room, kitchen and bath. Situated on 3 wooded lots.....\$19,500.
- HISTORIC DISTRICT** — Charming 1½ story brick home, L.R. w/fireplace, Den w/fireplace, 2 full baths.
- HICKORY LANE**—Great Room, Kitchen with convenient dining room, 3 bedroom, 2 baths, game room and large yard.....\$60,000.
- WATERFRONT** — Albemarle Sound, ½ acre lot on Bella Vista Drive.....\$26,500.
- FOR RENT** — House and apartments.
- 8.5 ACRES WATERFRONT**—With private boat basin, secluded, rustic 3 Bedroom log home in idyllic setting. 10% financing.
- HOME ON THE ALBEMARLE SOUND**—Cape Colony, 2 story brick, 3 or 4 Bedrooms, L.R. with fireplace, Family Room with fireplace, large deck, workshop. Central heat and air.....\$73,500.
- FANTASTIC BUY!**—Country Club area. Owner must sell. 4 BR, brick ranch. Over 2000 sq. ft., ½ acre fenced lot. Garage, family room with fireplace, 9½ per cent assumption.....\$62,500.
- CHOWAN BEACH** **SOLD** se on 2 lots. 2 BR, 1 bath, screened porch, 1 **SOLD** outing. Priced to sell.
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\$30,000	10%	\$289.50	14%	\$373.00	\$20,054
\$35,000	10%	\$337.70	14%	\$435.00	\$23,406
\$40,000	10%	\$385.90	14%	\$497.00	\$26,762

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I would like to have more information and the cost of building on my property. I understand there would be no obligation to buy and that you would give me these facts free of charge.

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Telephone (or neighbors) _____

If rural route please give directions _____

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- NEAR TOWN**—Attractive brick veneer home on ½ acre wooded lot, 3 BR, LR, den, dining area, 1½ baths. 10 per cent APR owner financing.....\$39,500
- 4 BEDROOM HOME** — On 2 acre lot. Convenient to town, 2 full baths, LR, family room w-woodstove, central air and oil furnace, 3 yrs. old, outbuildings. 10 per cent APR owner financing.....\$42,000.
- BRICK HOME** — Three BD, 2 baths, large livingroom with fireplace, dining room, kitchen. Well insulated. Central heat and air. Two car garage and workshop. 12 per cent owner financing.....\$49,500.
- SMALL HOUSE IN COUNTRY**—1 year old. Price reduced to.....\$12,500.
- HISTORIC DISTRICT** — Spacious 2½ story home with large, beautifully landscaped yard, 6 bedrooms, 2 full baths, 2 half baths, 2 car garage, workshop, guest house, recreation room, waterview.
- APARTMENT HOUSE** — Good location in town, 5 apartments, 3 lots.....\$40,000.
- ALBEMARLE SOUND** — Beautiful wooded lots over one acre in size on the water. Prices starting at an unbelievable.....\$24,000.
- INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY** — Apartment house with eight apartments. Excellent income in prime location. 9½ per cent assumption.....\$85,000.
- PRICE REDUCED** — Log Cabin, beautiful inside and out. Large fireplace, 2 bedrooms and loft. Maintenance free, energy efficient.....\$38,000.
- ACREAGE** — Three lovely acres in a choice location, privacy. 12 per cent owner financing. \$10,000.
- WATERFRONT** — Elegant home in a spectacular setting on the Albemarle Sound, featuring, foyer, great room, 3 or 4 bedrooms, Florida room, 2 full baths and 2 half baths. Plus 3 bdrm guest house. 1.1 acres with sandy beach. 12 per cent owner financing.
- COMMERCIAL BUILDING** **SOLD** 2.6 acres with 365' of highway frontage - 1 **SOLD** cent owner financing.
- HISTORIC DISTRICT** — Charming 4 BD home with 2 full baths, eat-in kitchen, formal dining room, L.R, den, and utility room. Beautiful yard. Price reduced.....\$47,500.
- Waterfront Lots** — Snug Harbor and Arrowhead. Other Lots and Acreage For Sale.