

Human Interest

# Please Don't Let Another Child Suffer

Special To The Post  
It was during the fall of 1972 when I first met Estelle Williamson Pritchett. She was a dainty little black lady, neatly dressed, obviously not a highly educated person but one wise from life's experiences of about 65 years. She was poised, very determined, with an air of quiet and simple dignity.

Mrs. Pritchett told me she was born to parents who could not care for her and had "given me away". During her childhood years, she moved from foster family to foster family. The limbo of not belonging had been both painful and difficult for her. She longed for a permanent home like other children.

When she reached teenage years, though she lacked education and felt the effects of a deprived childhood, she found work as a domestic, devoting her life to taking care of the children of families for whom she worked. She remained in North Carolina for a while and then went "up north". She married Wilbert Pritchett, who was widowed with no children born to her. Then 25 years ago, she began a pattern of working for families "up north" during the fall, winter and spring, returning "home" to North Carolina during the summer months. She carefully saved her money for summer "vacation". She managed to buy a small home, her haven.

Mrs. Pritchett came to The Children's Home Society demanding to know what efforts were being made on behalf of children. She listened intently as I explained our statewide adoption program and our special efforts to find permanent homes for older children now in the limbo of long-term foster care. The expression on her face mirrored her pain as she identified with the needs of these children. She has already visited several other agencies and child care institutions to learn



**ESTELLE WILLIAMSON PRITCHETT**  
...Quiet, simple dignity

about their programs. On this first visit, she did not say why she had come.

Several days later, she invited me to her little home. It was a small home, immaculately clean. With much pride, she showed me her nicknacks and told me how each one had come to her. Many were given by friends and the families for whom she had worked. She revealed a little book in which monthly payments on her home had been meticulously recorded. She then showed me her yard, lovingly kept. She shared her experiences with children, her involvement with her church and friends.

It was not until I was leaving that I learned why she asked me to visit. Since she had no blood relatives to inherit her possessions, she was considering a bequest to the agency. She asked many questions about the procedures necessary to naming The Children's Home Society in her Will. She wanted, her legacy to spare children the limbo she knew. I suggested she talk with an attorney to carry out her intent. As I left, she remarked to me, "please don't let another child suffer."

We talked on the telephone several times before she left to go back "up north". Several letters came from her asking what our agency was currently doing for children. I replied each time until my last letter returned, marked "no forwarding address". Then, nothing further was heard from her.

In late August 1978, The Children's Home Society was notified by the Clerk of The Superior Court that the agency had been named in the Will of Estelle Pritchett. Through her Will, she bequeathed everything she has to the agency to be used for "the benefit and rearing of underprivileged children."

I later learned that Mrs. Pritchett suffered a fatal heart attack after boarding a bus to return home after visiting friends. It did not surprise me that she has asked that her body be transferred to a medi-

cal school to teach medical students and her eyes were willed to the eye bank.

I visited her little apartment to which she had moved after selling her home. It was immaculate and all her treasures were in place. As I stood there, I remembered the little lady who had described each of her possessions with dignity and pride. Several of the nearby tenants in the public housing building came, speaking warmly of her and what she had meant to them. The suggestion was made that someone be called in to give a "price" on all of her possessions so the apartment could be vacated. I was unable to entertain this thought as I knew her friends would value these possessions if they were made available.

Since Mrs. Pritchett was actively involved in a local church, church members agreed to assist us in arranging a public sale of her possessions. We felt Mrs. Pritchett would have wanted her local and church friends to be invited. Her attorney revealed a savings account, the proceeds from the sale of her little home. When her legacy comes to The Children's Home Society, it will be placed in our Endowment Fund. The principal will remain intact and the income will provide services for children in the years to come. This is precisely what Mrs. Pritchett so meticulously planned.

Since her death, I have learned many things about this special little lady from her friends. Each Saturday morning, when she bought her groceries, she purchased additional ones for "shut-in". Her garden cart, laden with groceries and pulled by her small tractor, frequently slowed traffic on the road where she lived. Anonymously, she donated the rack for the choir robes at her church, directing her minister "not to tell anyone". She was always "the first one there to help someone else." She planned picnics for those in rest homes, planning these outings carefully and providing food and fun for all who attended. Among her possessions were several folding cots, purchased by her, for those who were unable to stand or sit. Mrs. Pritchett's life, devoted to serving humanity, was that of a true Christian.

One cannot help but be moved and awed by this little lady and the magnitude of her life's plan. She was a caring person, meaningful to so many whose lives she touched. Even though her early life was tragic, she had, somehow, gained strength and purpose. Her legacy to children now fulfills her plea to me—"please don't let another child suffer."

## WICI Will Honor Ms. Mary Hopper

The Charlotte Chapter of Women in Communications, Inc. (WICI), will be sponsoring a reception to honor Mary Hopper, a winner in the 1978 Clarion competition.

The reception will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 13 from 7:30-9 p.m. in the Carrousel Room of the NCBN Plaza.

Clarion awards are presented annually by Women in Communications, Inc. for outstanding work in newspapers, magazines, public relations or advertising.

Mary Hopper, WICI member and director of public Blood Drive

The American Red Cross recently held a Blood Drive on the campus of the University of N.C. in Charlotte. Though the effort was a successful one, the Red Cross is still short by several thousands pints a month of their goals and needs. WROQ, Carowinds and McDonalds were instrumental in making the Blood Drive a success.

relations for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Library, won an honorable mention for her P.R. campaign on "How to Catch 2,600 Teenagers in the Public Library." She was presented the award recently at a national meeting held in Detroit.

The WICI is an organization of professional men and women in the field of communications that supports freedom of the press and the advancement of women in the communication industries, especially management.

This non-profit organization sponsors seminars, newsletters, panel discussions and special programs for its members.

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