

Husband And Wife Find Experience Challenging

By Andrew McCorkle
Post Staff Writer

Despite having to combat some old stereotypes held both by blacks and whites, the only black doctors in Concord find the townspeople friendly and the experience challenging.

The husband and wife team of Drs. Gerard and Rolande Romain have filled a void in the town that was present for about 25 years - since Concord had its last black physician.

The doctors were recruited to Concord by the C. C. Griffin Metro Health Clinic Association about 18 months ago. C. C. Griffin, former principal of Logan High School and civic activist, spearheaded the drive to attract black doctors to the area.

Griffin said that there is a great need in Concord for black physicians.

He explained that studies have proven that blacks are dying at approximately a 32 percent faster rate than whites. The reason, he said, is often because of lifestyle and environment.

A black physician generally relates better to black patients, because he understands their environment and can help them by counseling in addition to any

medical remedies they may need, he stated.

Mr. Romain, a family practitioner, agreed.

"The physical complaint might be a reflection of what's going on in the neighborhood or at home," he explained in an interview recently. "A doctor just doesn't treat the person physically. He must be able to relate to the whole person."

The Romains, parents of two girls, Chynthia, 6, and Ericka, 4, are natives of Port-Au-Prince, Haiti; however, both of their children were born in the United States.

They both hope to return to their country to practice but they say that the experience they gain in the U.S. is valuable.

"Most doctors in Haiti have some experience in the U.S. and Canada," explained Mr. Romain. "It's always good to have some experience before you go back. Most doctors have this experience."

The Romains met at medical school in Haiti, both say they were influenced to become doctors by family members.

"My brothers are physicians," said Mrs. Romain,

a pediatrician. "They expected it from me. You're expected to go to school, do well and become a doctor."

"I was more or less influenced by my environment," explained Mr. Romain. "My cousin was a doctor and I kinda followed in his footsteps."

Mr. Romain once considered going into the military.

"I think that every young man, at one time or another, would like to serve his country," he stated. "Every young man wants to do something that would give him the opportunity to prove himself."

But he quickly found the medical profession challenging enough.

"The medical profession is one way you can help people, prove yourself and still be useful to your community," he explained.

There are only about 12,000 black physicians practicing in the United States but the Romains agree that it is not a career for young black people who want to get rich quick, especially for those who wish to serve predominantly black or low income patients.

It is difficult for a young physician to get started," Mr. Romain said.

"It's taking a young physician about five years to get established now," added his wife, compared to one year about six years ago.

Physicians who want to serve black patients primarily will not reap the economic rewards that their white counterparts will, Mrs. Romain explained.

Many black people are poor, and listed on the

Medicaid, welfare, Medicare rolls. "Money-wise income is not going to be the same," she said, "because the government pays much less than the person who pays his own bill or has other forms of insurance."

However, the Romains did not accept the job in Concord to become wealthy.

"There was definitely a need in this community," explained Mr. Romain, "and it has been a challenge."

Barber-Scotia College Students from left Dean Don Price, second from left, of the to right: Oliver Ekong, Melody Van University of Florida. Hooke and Sheila Johnson pose with

Three BSC Students Attend Florida's First Colloquium

Special To The Post

Gainesville - Thirty-eight seniors from 11 predominantly black colleges in the Southeast, including three from Barber-Scotia College, were selected to attend the University of Florida's first colloquium for prospective black graduate students.

"These students represent the finest young black scholars in the Southeast," said Dr. Paul Kotey, assistant dean for the university's Graduate School. "They were selected be-

cause of their outstanding records as undergraduates and their great potential as graduate students, particularly in areas that blacks have too-long shunned."

On campus overnight and most of two days, the students heard about greater opportunities for people with graduate degrees, specifics about graduate training at the University of Florida and the availability of scholarships and other financial aid. They also met with deans and faculty members of their

departments of special emphasis and were greeted by University President Robert Marston, Executive Vice-President John Nattress and Graduate School Dean Don Price.

"It is vital that black students avail themselves of more graduate training opportunities," said Kotey, himself a black man. "There are hundreds of colleges and universities constantly seeking black people with graduate degrees of their faculties and more and more businesses and industries are placing a premium on graduate degrees."

Among the participants from Barber-Scotia College were Oliver Ekong, a computer science major and son of Mr. and Mrs. Regina Ekong of Nigeria; Sheila Johnson, a speech pathology major and daughter of Constance Johnson of Pittsburgh, Pa.; and Melody Van Hooke, majoring in social work and daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Van Hooke of Mebane, N.C.

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