

Persistence Drives Ford Back To Classroom

By Drexel Ball
Special To The Post

Greensboro - Annie Ford walks gingerly into the classroom, drops her bulging bag on the floor and reaches for her notepad and pen. She listens attentively as the professor breezes through his lecture.

That's not unusual for a graduate student, but Ford is not your typical graduate student. She is a 53-year-old grandmother pursuing a master's degree in adult education at North Carolina A&T.

Five months ago, she sobbed uncontrollably as she stepped to the platform to receive a bachelor of science degree from Winston-Salem State. Ford's pursuit of an advanced degree is also atypical considering most academicians her age are either seeking tenure or trying to find a publisher for a book.

"I've always wanted to be a teacher," Ford says softly, but with conviction. "I'm only pursuing a dream."

The dream began at an early age. Ford remembers growing up in Winston-Salem and riding a cold bus some 25 miles to a church, which had a basement that served as the classroom. She said her first grade teacher made an indelible mark and influenced her life.

"I sat in the classroom and watched the way she conducted herself," Ford remembers. "She had total control of all the students, and I said when I grow up that's the kind of person I'd like to be."

"Annie Ford is an inspiration to the thousands of people who believe education has passed them by after reaching maturity," says Dr. B.W. Harris, area coordinator of Adult Education in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy at A&T. "Annie Ford is to be admired for her persistence through tremendous odds. She represents a trend of matured people who are actively engaged in educational pursuits."

Ford grew up in depressed times. Money was scarce. Food was scarce, and she was unable to complete formal education. As she grew up, she fell in love and married.

Her first child soon arrived. The family blossomed and eventually totaled five boys and three girls. Ford and her husband separated and she was forced to raise the children on her own, supporting them on a meager salary generated as a



Annie Ford (center) engages in a discussion with Karen Allen and Dr. B.W. Harris, professor in Adult Education at North Carolina A&T.

manager for a chain of convenient stores.

But the dream of becoming a teacher never went away. "I knew I couldn't pursue an education with a lot of children running around the house," says Ford. "I felt I had an obligation to see that they get the best education available to them."

Ford feels a degree of accomplishments as all her children have completed high school. Three of them have claimed degrees from technical institutions, one has become a word processor and another graduated from Penn State.

With her children having completed their educational pursuits, Ford thought it was time that she pursue her educational goals. So in 1980 she enrolled in Forsyth Tech.

"I felt very proud when I got the degree from Forsyth Tech," Ford says. "But I was talking with someone and I was told the degree I had was nothing more than an advanced high school diploma."

With that disclosure providing the impetus, Ford enrolled at Winston-Salem State in 1982. This past

summer, she walked on the platform at the Winston-Salem Memorial Coliseum to receive a degree in applied science with a concentration in psychology and sociology.

Ford recalls the long hours she spent studying while attending Winston-Salem State.

"It wasn't easy getting back into the habit of studying," Ford recounts. "College is no snap. The whole technique of studying has changed since I attended elementary school. In fact, I spent many hours in the library reading books on how to study."

She also had to overcome the stares and puzzled look from her classmates because of her age.

"I was apprehensive at first," she remembers. "I really didn't know how the students were going to accept me. A lot of them looked at me as if to say, 'What is this old lady doing in this class?'"

Ford maintains employment at a Winston-Salem department store while matriculating part-time at A&T in the graduate school. She commutes from Winston-Salem to Greensboro twice a week.

When she completes the require-

ments for a master's degree in adult education, Ford hopes to work with the elderly.

"Senior citizens in this country are getting a raw deal. I want very much to change how the elderly are perceived, and I would like to see more programs created for them instead of being cut."

But Ford's primary concern at the moment is obtaining a master's degree.

"The more education you get, the more you want," she says. After I get the master's, I'm going to shoot for the doctorate."

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Local Doctor Recertified As Family Specialist

Kansas City, Mo. - Dr. Melvin Thomas Pinn Jr., of Charlotte, has been recertified as a diplomate of the American Board of Family Practice (ABFP) as a result of passing a recertification examination offered by the ABFP. The physician thus maintains specialist status in the medical specialty of family practice.

ABFP diplomates must continue to show proof of competence in the field of comprehensive, continuing care of the family by being recertified every six years. Family practice was the first medical specialty to require diplomates to be recertified on a continuing basis.

The written examination is designed to prove the candidate's continuing competence in the basic components of family practice - internal medicine, surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, psychiatry and neurology, and community medicine.

To qualify for certification initially a physician must have successfully completed three years of residency training in family practice and passed an intensive certification examination. There are some 378 residency training programs in teaching hospitals and university medical centers across the United States.

There now have been certified



Dr. Melvin Thomas Pinn Jr.
.....Family practice specialist
more than 29,000 diplomates in the specialty. Most are members of the American Academy of Family Phy-

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sicians, the national association of family doctors. The Academy was the first national medical group to require members to take continuing study, and was chiefly responsible for securing specialty status for family practice.



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