



JULIA ROBERTS

## Julia Roberts finally gets all the rest she deserves

By Alan Hodge

When asked about her secret to a long and happy life, 90 year old Julia Roberts of Kings Mountain has a simple answer - "Just trust in the Lord." A professional midwife for much of her working career, Roberts helped bring 167 new lives into the world over a 34 year span.

"I never lost a baby or a mother the whole time," Roberts points out with justifiable pride.

Roberts' life has seen many ups and downs during its lengthy span. She recalled early

days on the family farm near Waco when she would take a break from the fields and deliver biscuits to her grandmother. Sundays were a time when the black community in early Waco gathered at a spring for singing and fellowship. Children learned to work at an early age.

"When I was ten years old I used to take the scraps of cloth when the women made quilts and cut them into little stars," Roberts said. "After a while I got enough stars to make my first quilt at age twelve."

Life was simple on the farm, but when change came, Roberts was ready.

"My daddy got a model T Ford in 1919," Roberts said. "I drove that car as far as Shelby at 20 miles an hour. The road wasn't nothing but a path full of holes, and you had to pull over to let another car go by."

When she turned 21, Roberts went up North to Philadelphia and worked as a housekeeper. There, she married and had the first three of her nine children. After her first husband passed away, Roberts married again in 1936. Six of her children are still living.

Always interested in helping others, Roberts went to school and became a licensed midwife as well as a practical nurse.

"I was a midwife in Gaston County for 14 years, and one in Cleveland County for nearly 20 years," Roberts recalled. "I also spent 15 years as a nurse."

With so many years spent delivering and raising children, Roberts has strong opinions of how they should be trained.

"It says in the Bible to not spare the rod, and I believe it." She affirmed. "I made my children stay close by me, they didn't show out in stores and other places."

As the years went by, Roberts became involved in the Kings Mountain Senior Center. She not only worked there for 10 years, but also played in the band.

"I beat the drum and played the flute," Roberts said. "We traveled with that band to Gastonia, Charlotte, and even to the mountains."

For her 90th birthday this year, Roberts got special recognition.

"The governor of North Carolina, Senator Jesse Helms, and the mayor of Kings Mountain all sent me letters on my birthday," Roberts remembered. "It was real nice of them."

What does Roberts do to fill her days now that she's not officially working?

"I rest is what I do," she said. "After working as a nurse all those years I need some sleep because nurses don't get much."

If anyone deserves a little rest and relaxation, it's Julia Roberts.



CHRISTMAS VISIT- Teachers and students from Twelve Oaks Academy in Shelby visited Billy Bridges Monday. Pictured, are left to right; Ginny Bush, Betty Upton, Carolyn Black, and Fabienne Vernon. Billy sits up front taking it all in.

## Classmates sing for Billy

By Alan Hodge

The sounds of Christmas carols filled the home of seven year old Billy Bridges Monday. Billy, who has Ellis Van Crevelle syndrome and is limited to where he can go, was all ears as tunes like "Frosty the Snowman," "We Wish You a Merry Christmas," and "O Come All Ye Faithful" were crooned especially in his honor.

Billy's grandmother Helen Barnette was lavish in her praise for the singing visitors.

"It's things like this that keep Billy going," Barnette said.

After the songfest, Barnette explained some of Billy's medi-

cal problems to everyone present. The list was mind boggling. In addition to having a reduced chest cavity, Billy also has pelvic problems, must be fed intravenously, and is on oxygen 24 hours a day. Even though he's under the care of 14 different doctors, Billy is a fighter.

In spite of all his difficulties, he's still a seven year old boy," said Barnette. "Billy is the kind of child who doesn't meet a stranger."

Billy's outgoing personality has won him countless friends. Last Christmas, 200 carolers stopped by his house on Bentley Road near Shelby to

give him a dose of Yuletide spirit.

As icing on the Christmas cake, the Twelve Oaks Academy students, parent Ginny Bush, and teachers Bettie Upton and Carolyn Black presented Billy with a Jumbo Jet Transformer and card signed by the entire ensemble.

"Now all I need is a truck and a computer," Billy said when asked what he wanted Santa to drop down his chimney.

Though the students and faculty of Twelve Oaks Academy had come to put some cheer into Billy, it was obvious that when the songs had ended that the spiritual exchange had been mutual.



PINK LADIES LINEUP- The Kings Mountain Hospital Auxiliary gathered December 5 to light their "Tree of Love." Auxiliary officers are- left to right: Frances Alexander, Peggy Baird, Edie Lovell, Sybil Hallman, Jessie Collins.

## STEWART

From 5B

Dorthea Robinson of Gastonia, and sons Paul and Robert. In addition, Stewart can claim 16 grandchildren, 29 great grandchildren, and 2 great great

grandchildren as well as many nieces and nephews.

For someone who has seen the coming of the technological age, Stewart retains the sense of community and knowledge of the value of hard work to this day.

"I was always glad to help the

neighbors when they were sick or needed a midwife," Stewart remembered. "I liked to work the garden too. Hard work, that's my secret to long life."

A resident these days at Courtland Terrace in Gastonia, Essie Stewart is looking forward to the millenium.

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