

Reception To Mark 25 Years Service

Carolyn Stokes Nursery Director Molds School And Children



MUTUAL AFFECTION between Mrs. Yvonne Knight and the children at Carolyn Stokes Day Nursery is apparent on even a brief visit when one sees the tots flock around her to exhibit their feelings of devotion.

By SHARON SCHLEGEL
Staff Writer

A turn of fate changed the course of Mrs. Yvonne C. Knight's life.

One day in 1945 she decided to return to work part-time in order to enable her husband to further his studies in psychology. Formerly a grade school teacher, she applied for work as a substitute. Instead she was offered a position as a full-time nursery school teacher, work she had never contemplated.

The acceptance of that offer started her on the road to a life of fulfillment in a job she says "is one of those where going in on Monday morning is as welcome as going home on Friday night."

At a reception March 28 at the Contemporary Club Auditorium, Mrs. Knight will be honored for 25 years of service as executive director of Carolyn Stokes Day Nursery. As such she has not only molded the school through crucial periods of change and evolution, but has had a hand in molding the lives of its students as well.

"That first nursery job was at Franklin School, where I spent 18 months," recalls Mrs. Knight. "When I was offered the position as director at Carolyn Stokes I wondered if I had the necessary administrative ability. I walked over to see the school one day and it was love at first sight. I looked at the front door and it just seemed to say welcome. I felt I was home."

Life's Concern

Today Yvonne Knight wonders if that might not have been a premonition. In 1951 her husband George, a professor at Rider College, died. Since then, the main concern of her life has been the day nursery of which she is so proud.

Although Carolyn Stokes has been in operation since 1923, when it was set up through the efforts of the Contemporary Club and the

Stokes family in Trenton, its greatest modifications came after the appointment of Yvonne Knight as director. Even before she was officially appointed, this determined and competent woman made known her belief that a director must give strong guidance.

When Miss Bertha Heckman, who was retiring from the position of director after 18 years, interviewed Mrs. Knight, she interspersed her conversation with the expression, "When you take my place." Mrs. Knight finally interrupted her.

"You have served long, well and honorably here," she said, "but with God's help I hope, if I get this position, that I may make a place of my own!"

Education Program

Once appointed, Mrs. Knight didn't take long to make her place. Formerly a custodial school where children napped, were fed and played, Carolyn Stokes Nursery had no planned educational program in 1946. With Miss Knight's guidance, it began hiring certified teachers and developing a fully accredited program carefully structured by age-groups which includes the nurturing of such things as appreciation of nature and animals as well as supervised play and study. It also slowly began to phase out children older than pre-school age and to specialize at a nursery school level.

An early battle involved the change in menu from just soup and pudding to a balanced meal. "One teacher objected because she said 'Now we're getting the same food as the children!' I had to explain to her that was the point exactly."

In 1951 the first Negro child was admitted, and today the nursery is fully integrated both in students and staff.

No Prejudice

"We charge a sliding scale fee here according to a mother's ability to pay,"

Mrs. Knight explains. "But we see to it that both black and white children are admitted. I feel that a school should be a microcosm of society . . . it should reflect all segments of society. Children at Carolyn Stokes know no prejudice."

In 1954 the school began providing its own transportation to help working mothers conserve their time. "I believe we were the first United Fund agency to do so," says Mrs. Knight, who picked up and brought home the children for one year when no one else was able to do so.

Over the years she has also filled in for the cook, and painted furniture and walls to help keep the school in the first-class shape she refuses to compromise.

One anecdote recalls the visit of a North Jersey nursery school director and her board chairman when the school was still located on Taylor Street, its home until April, 1968. They found Mrs. Knight busily painting in old jeans covered with drippings. "They considered it absolutely improper — but I considered it improper to visit without calling first!"

"Bit Of Beauty"

Thrilled with the new property on which Carolyn Stokes Day Nursery now stands at 1 Fairfacts Avenue, Mrs. Knight espouses the philosophy that "you can find a bit of beauty wherever you are."

"Here we have all kinds of birds, squirrels and rabbits. What a wonderful opportunity for city children!" She dreams of eventually planting gardens the children can tend and even having a pond on the 6½ acre tract. Meanwhile, a nature trail and trips to such places as Cedarbliss ensure the youngsters a chance to soak up her enthusiasm for nature.

On the subject of day care and the working mother, Mrs. Knight has very definite opinions.

"I think the crucial question is how the mother feels

about working," she begins. "If she feels put upon being home all day, her child will know it. A child is a barometer of his home. If the mother is happy and content, whether working or at home, her child will reflect it. I believe the child's happiness depends on the quality of time a mother is with the child, not the quantity."

She is quick to add that "not every mother should work any more than every child should go to nursery school. The important ingredient is a mother who is happily participating in her child's life."

Major Changes

After 25 years of intimate association with children, Mrs. Knight notes two major changes she has observed. "There is a lack of self-discipline in the children I see today. They are not being taught to develop inner strengths. We try to teach that here."

She also believes that an increase in aggression is due to television and the inability of youngsters to distinguish between make-believe and reality. "When children see people being hit, they don't realize they inflict pain by copying those actions."

The mother of one child, a married daughter who resides in California, Mrs. Knight calls her job "the most interesting thing I've ever done." She hopes to continue at Carolyn Stokes as long as she is able to contribute, even though she feels that "In a way I've been doing a demonstration job for 25 years. We were the first of our kind and now I'm asked by schools all over the state to advise them and to allow their students to come here to study or watch what we do."

Today Mrs. Knight is fond of quoting an adage that goes: "It has been truly said that if you would set your name among the stars, then you should write it upon the hearts of children. They will remember."

Cassini Carousel



No Privacy For Tony

Reverse Shift In Fashion

By Igor And Oleg Cassini



THE INTERNATIONAL EXPRESS: Lord Snowdon (Princess Margaret's husband) got very angry with the managers of a New York restaurant when he was here recently. Lunching there on business, he was incensed when photographers suddenly appeared on the scene. "That's not cricket," said Antony Armstrong-Jones. But he was smiling when photographers caught him at the opening of a play titled "AC-DC" in Brooklyn.

It's no surprise to anybody close to the operation that producer Marty Poll left the Manhattan filming of "Joel Delaney" after a big falling out with Shirley Maclaine. The latter has incurred the wrath of many "Joel Delaney" co-workers; this is one time out when Shirley has been difficult and temperamental. She even called in two psychiatrist-advisors who rewrote portions of the script.

This may have helped Shirley but it made everybody else c-r-a-z-y. Miss Maclaine, enjoying unprecedented literary success for her book "Don't Fall Off The Mountain" is now something of a heroine-guru to readers who appreciate her deep inner drive to find spiritual meaning as expressed in the book. But co-workers, who complain she was "worried about her key light" and "mean to little people" say that her spirituality isn't evident in the filming of "Joel Delaney."

Insiders in Hollywood say that songwriter Burt Bacharach so thoroughly wears the pants in his family that his beautiful blonde wife, Angie Dickenson, has been terribly overshadowed by him. Now she may come into her own. Director Roger Vadim believes Angie has never been properly used in American films and he will show her to be as sensuous as Jeanne Moreau in his "Pretty Maids All In A Row." (Vadim is the Frenchman who has given "the Vadim treatment" to Bardot, Deneuve, Stroyberg, and Jane Fonda, to whom he is still married, in a manner of speaking.) H-m-m-m, anyway, imagine Angie being overshadowed by anybody after those exciting years when she was a pal of the late President Kennedy, John Kenneth Galbraith, et al.

ALKALINE ROCK IN FASHION: The hard stuff seems to be dropping by the wayside, and dresses and flowing lines and civilized looks are coming back to some extent. But for the great majority of women, these looks never went away. If you rode out the Midi furor, you're lucky. You saved a lot of money and now you can proceed to wear whatever you were wearing before it all started. . . . Watch those mini dresses and hot pants (short shorts) proliferate as spring starts springing. . . . Soft suedes continue to be the ticket in lots of the hot pants lines and they'll be worn, as we've said before, all through the hot weather — especially in soft pastel shades. . . . Jackie Onassis bought her hot pants in suede, just for openers. . . . As women's suit lapels begin to widen, men's lapels will start to get narrow again. Save your slim ties; they may come back too, like Confederate money. . . . Boots are too hot for warm weather, but the boot "look" is going to continue in the up-the-leg, thong-wrapped sandal, in canvas leggings, in the openwork boot of the high old Roman Sandal variety, things of that ilk. . . .

If you buy something in white now — flannel, gabardine, knit — that seems a bit heavy for summer, don't worry about it. You'll be wearing it all next fall and winter, too. White is the don't-miss no color of 1971-72. . . . Have you been wondering what they call the dress that hovers near the knee, either just slightly above, or at, or slightly below? Well, of course, the French do have a name for it and it's the genouette, as in genuine, if you feel you must have a name for it. . . . Long coats are going to stick around for a while, so don't cut yours off in a fit of mini madness.

Tape Prevents Night Accidents

NEW YORK (UPI) — Safety authorities suggest putting sewon reflective tape on clothing children wear outdoors after dark. Create decorative designs or racing stripes on jackets, sweaters, sweatshirts and caps so that car headlights pick up the reflection.

More than half of all fatal car-pedestrian accidents since 1961 have occurred after dark. The reflective tape may be one way of

keeping your child from being involved in such an accident.

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