

# 'What Man Would

*Following is The New York Times account of Eartha White's story following Thursday's ceremony.*

By ANGELA TAYLOR  
New York Times News Service

NEW YORK — "Let me first explain to you about my name," said Eartha Mary Magdalene White, her bright brown eyes commanding attention as she sat in her neat black dress with fur-trimmed sleeves, her small body almost lost in the armchair of her room at the Plaza Hotel.

"Six months before I was born, two elderly relatives came to visit my mother," she began. "One said I should be called Eartha, so that I would be a storehouse unto the people. The other one wanted Mary Magdalene for that great woman in the Bible who did so much good."

That visit was in 1876 in Jacksonville, Fla. Miss White was the 13th and last child born to Clara English White, a former slave, and the only one of the 13 to grow to adulthood.

Eartha White has lived up to her first name. She has been

a storehouse of good works to both the blacks and whites of Jacksonville. Her energy and dedication is responsible for eight projects: The Eartha M. M. White Nursing Home, a modern, 120-bed hospital; two boarding homes for the ambulatory ill, aged or handicapped; two child care centers; a lodging house for alcoholics; a mission to feed, clothe and comfort the poor and a community center for recreation and education.

Despite her age, she hasn't stopped. ("My grandfather lived to 129.")

"I never married — I was too busy," Miss White went on. "What man would put up with me running around the way I do?"

Indeed, she has been busy. Although 94 years is a long span to remember, she details her life with more experiences than seem possible and sprinkles her narration with biblical quotations.

Her mother, she said, was a stewardess on the Clyde ships out of Jacksonville. When Eartha was in her teens, they came to New York because "there was too much sickness in Jacksonville." Eartha studied hairdressing and music — "I sang

# Put Up With Me...!

with the first Negro opera company." (She doesn't remember its name.)

As a young woman, Miss White returned to Jacksonville to teach school, but "It didn't pay much." Still she managed to save \$150 and in 1904, she gave up teaching to open what she calls a "department store."

"I thought I could buy the world with that \$150," she recalled with a laugh. "But when my merchandise came, it was but one crate and when I complained to the man who sold it to me that the goods hadn't come, he laughed and said I was sitting on it."

She remembers getting up at dawn to go down to the docks to get vegetables inexpensive enough for her poor customers. After two years of running the store, Miss White attended a meeting of the Union Benevolent Association, a black group which had purchased some land to build a home for the aged in 1885, but had never gotten beyond the planning stage. Miss White said she would take over the responsibility and with her own money and some cajoled from others she built the home, which currently cares for 50 elderly people.

Other projects followed. She is most proud of the hospital named for her, for which she donated the land. The red brick building was partly financed by federal funds, but Miss White is active in raising the \$200,000 it still needs from private donors.

Although she scoffs about such notions as fashion, she takes a feminine interest in clothes, asking her traveling companion to bring out a printed dress with glittery threads and with butterfly sleeves made of chiffon. And the set of rhinestone jewelry a friend had given her.

Miss White wore the dress Thursday at the Plaza Hotel luncheon where she was presented with a \$5,000 volunteer award given by the Lane Bryant Department Store chain.

A second award for the same amount was given to the Valley Orthopedic Clinic of Calexico, Calif.

What will Miss White do with the money?

"I've already decided. I want it to serve humanity. The money is to God, not to me," she replied. "What would I do with it? Sit around The Plaza Hotel? I'm too busy."



EARTHA M. M. WHITE  
*Lakeland, Florida*

FIVE  
THOUSAND  
DOLLAR  
INDIVIDUAL  
AWARD



# Eartha White Carries Out The Prophecy Of Her Name

By RAY KNIGHT  
Journal Staff Writer

Eartha Mary Magdalene White is a frail 94-year-old woman who has a way of getting things done.

Last Thursday, when she received the Lane Bryant Volunteer Award in New York, she spoke with a note of the old Presbyterian doctrine of predestination about the better part of a century she has spent serving others:

"My name," she said, "was given to me six months before my birth. One of my relatives wanted me to be named Eartha, so I would be a storehouse unto the people. Another relative wanted me to be named Mary Magdalene after a great woman of the Bible.

"Although I was my mother's thirteenth child and the only one who lived, I have truly carried out the prophecy of those aged men who named me."

The list of the many volunteer roles Miss White has filled would include those of lecturer, humanitarian, teacher, coordinator, educator, leader, pioneer, nurse, soldier, writer, planner, promoter and counselor — to mention only a few. But even though the usual age for retirement has long passed, Miss White has not slowed down.

Her newest and most ambitious project is the Eartha M. M. White Nursing Home, a handsome, three-story, ma-

## Personality Of The Week

sorry structure at 5334 Moncrief Road.

It is a non-profit, 120-bed institution that furnishes comprehensive nursing care to patients, the majority of whom are indigent. Its current per cent of occupancy is 94.4.

Financing such an operation is a large task, she admits. It has been her policy in past years to turn over gifts she receives at the birthday parties — all the more recent ones having been held in the civic auditorium — to the home. And contributions also help, but even when funds grow slim, she doesn't worry: "I am sponsoring nine projects without compensation and find that faith in God will accomplish all things."

In addition to the nursing home and an old folks home, which she also runs, Miss White has been instrumental in the establishment of a maternity home, a child placement and orphans home, a home for delinquent black girls, the Harriet Beecher Stowe Community Center and a tubercular rest home.

She is the founder and president of the Clara White Mission, an agency which has served hundreds of destitute and helpless individuals.

During the depression, the

mission distributed food, clothing and other necessities free of charge to persons suffering severe economic losses. Food is continuously distributed by the mission to the underprivileged and toys are given to needy children at Christmas.

The mission provides prisoners released from Duval County's prisons with food, clothing, job counseling and any other services needed for their readjustment to society. For more than 40 years, she visited the inmates at the prisons and took interest in their personal concerns and problems.

Miss White's interest in preserving historical heritage led her to collect a large quantity of antiques, historical photos and novelties, furniture, bric-a-brac and other articles of cultural significance. They are now displayed at the Eartha M. M. White Historical Museum.

She is presently associated with the National Business League, in which she serves as historian. In addition, she is a member of the state and national Association of Colored Women's Clubs, the state and national Housewives League, the Seminole Culture Club, the Jacksonville Historical Society and the Jackson-

ville Humane Society.

A native of Jacksonville, Miss White was the 13th child of Clara English White, a former slave, and a review of her remarkable life gives truth to the prophecy of a minister who predicted at her birth: "She is going to live and be a blessing to everyone."

Her history of volunteer service to the community dates back to the 1880s.

In 1885, several black persons organized themselves into a group called the Union Benevolent Association. They devoted their efforts to charitable activities and purchased land as a site for a home for the aged.

But the group became inactive and the idea for a home never went past the planning stage.

Fifteen years later, Miss White, a school teacher and social worker by that time, succeeded in bringing the group together for its first meeting since shortly after its inception.

Inspired by the young woman's concern, the association granted Miss White the responsibility for constructing a home for the aged, as well as any other agency she deemed necessary for the community's needs.

She also was made president of the association and has held that office since that time. Her intensive campaign to obtain funds for the home

was successful and it was finally built.

Hundreds of individuals depending on charity for their survival have been served by this agency, free of charge. At present, more than 50 elderly people are being cared for at the home.

During the Spanish-American War in 1898, Miss White catered to the needs of the sick and wounded, providing nursing care and distributing and administering food.

A Daughter of the Grand Army of the Republic and a member of the Women's Relief Corps, she was the only woman in a 60-man interracial "War Camp Community Service Conference" in Jacksonville during World World I.

For a time, she was director of the War Camp Community Services and coordinator of recreation in Savannah, Ga. She was also a member of President Woodrow Wilson's White House Conference.

During World War II, as a colonel of the Women's National Defense Program, she organized canteen service and managed various Red Cross Center activities.

Eartha White's mother had a special prescription for life:

"Do all the good you can,  
In all the ways you can,  
In all the places you can,  
For all the people you can,  
While you can."

Miss White is a living example of this policy.

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