### Shirley Tells Of Life With Vernon and Vickie 'On and Off the Road . .'

# Urban League's First Lady

*By Marie Phillips Cooke*

In a swank hotel suite located on a floor just beneath the penthouse, sat Mrs. Shirley Yarbrough Jordan and her "very best friend."

Mrs. Jordan is the wife of the National Urban League's top executive, Vernon E. Jordan Jr. and her best friend is their 14-year-old daughter, Vickie.

What kind of woman does it take to live with a man who has to share so much of himself with others? Mrs. Jordan recently sat and told the story from the beginning to the present.

A tiny lady who stands a bit over five feet, she recalled the past 15 years . . . the sorrows . . . the pleasures.

*Began In Atlanta*

Born 36 years ago in Atlanta, Ga., she is the youngest of the two daughters of Shedrick Yarbrough, a retired Southern Railway dining car waiter, and Mrs. Rosalie Yarbrough, former mail clerk at Federal Savings and Loan.

Like most youngsters, she attended public schools and lived a healthy childhood. After graduating from high school, she left Atlanta to study sociology and psychology at Howard University in Washington, D.C., where she was graduated in 1958. It was at Howard that she met the man she was to marry.

She recalled, "I was in my senior year and Vernon was a first year law student. I remembered hearing a lot about him during my high school days from his brother (Windsor Jordan). He and I were good friends and he was always talking about his older brother, Vernon.

*Just A "Come-on"*

"One day when I was in the cafeteria I saw him (Vernon) and spoke to him. Later, I set up a date for him with my roommate. Well, after I had made the arrangements and everything, he stood her up."

Perhaps what Miss Shirley Yarbrough didn't realize then was that the "roommate thing" was just a "come-on."

"Anyway," she said, "Vernon and I became friends. I remember we'd meet after chapel and take long walks. We'd sit in a restaurant and talk about the problems I was having with my boyfriend and Vernon would act like he was trying to help.

"So one day he up and said, 'When are you going to let me kiss you?' My answer to him was 'When the time is right you won't have to ask.'"

So finally the "right time" did come and it's assumed Vernon did kiss Shirley, because on December 13, 1953 they were married.

While Vernon was finishing up at Howard, Shirley was quite busy at home with her parents in Atlanta preparing for her first and only child which was due to arrive the following fall. "Miss Vickie," as she is called was born on September 1.

The day Vernon came home from Washington with his law degree in his hand, he learned that Shirley had already found a nest for them in a "most desirable apartment complex" called the Paradise Apartments.

"So we moved out of my parents' home the very same day," she recalled.

*$35 A Week*

"Vernon's first job as a law clerk paid $35 a week (and that was in the early 60's). But fortunately, Shirley had been hired as a welfare worker with the Atlanta County State Department and was able to help balance the family budget.

It wasn't long before the "Jordan ball got to rolling," because 18 months later Mr. Jordan joined the staff at the Southern Regional Council where he was assistant to Wiley Branton (now a Washington attorney) in the voter education department, and they moved out of the Paradise Apartments into a two-family townhouse.

It was in 1965 that Mr. Jordan began working as an attorney with the Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) in Atlanta.

*Mrs. Vernon E. Jordan Jr. (Shirley Yarbrough), tells of her life with the National Urban League's executive secretary.*

*Tragedy Strikes*

It was in 1965 that Mrs. Jordan remembered "feeling extremely tired" after a long day's work. She would go home, have dinner and go to bed.

Her "tiredness" worsened and finally she agreed to undergo tests at a city hospital. It was there she learned she was a victim of multiple sclerosis which ended her career with the welfare department.

This is the disease which causes partial paralysis. Fortunately, the ailment has not made an invalid of Mrs. Jordan. She is able to get around with the aid of a cane, drives herself and does everything else she desires but at a slower pace.

In her 12-room home in White Plains, N.Y., located only 25 miles outside of New York City where her husband works, Mrs. Jordan supervises its operation.

A full-time housekeeper is there to tend to the heavy chores and even prepares the meals, but as Mrs. Jordan says, "It sounds good to say you have a housekeeper but people don't realize that someone has to keep the working conditions up to par and be around to see that everything runs smoothly."

Although fortunate to have many modern-day conveniences, the Urban League's First Lady doesn't sit around all day with her girlfriends sipping coffee or playing bridge. However, a group of area wives get together and do something "to improve our minds, like taking in a show and having lunch on Broadway once a month. Once we even had an overnight sleepover which we called our 'women's retreat.'

*"Peaches 'n Cream"*

The remainder of the month, however, she is busy with Vickie and school, shopping, planning dinner and cocktail parties for her husband's business associates and pursuing general wifely duties which encompass just about everything.

Being the wife of such an important national figure isn't really peaches 'n cream. Mr. Jordan may visit five different cities in a week's time, "but he's always home on the weekends." At least once a month, Mrs. Jordan and Vickie pack their bags and travel with him.

On one of these trips she remembered someone walking up to her and asking for her autograph. "Although I was totally stunned, I gave it to him." And another time she said laughingly, someone telling her she looked like Leslie Uggams.

Keeping herself busy while her husband is on the road doesn't come hard for Mrs. Jordan. Perhaps being born under the sign Pisces has a lot to do with it. It's been said that the Pisces female takes deep pride and satisfaction in everything she does, and is often called "a model of saintly humanitarianism."

*Enjoys Cooking*

She's actively involved with the Woodlands High School Parent-Teachers Association, and belongs to the Moles, Links, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and the Urban League Guild.

In her spare hours she finds time to do one of the things she enjoys most — cooking. A favorite in the Jordan household is Shirley's Rancho Grunde which she boasts is "really together."

Her recipe calls for ground chuck, cooked rice, kidney beans, tomato puree, cheddar cheese, canned tomatoes, chopped onions and green peppers.

To prepare the dish is simple. Brown the chuck in a large skillet with chopped onions and green peppers. Add tomato puree, cooked rice and sprinkle grated cheese on top. Bake in a moderately hot oven until cheese has melted.

The Jordans enjoy this dish served with a crisp tossed green salad and hot Italian bread oozing with butter and a chilled glass of Chablis or Rose. Try it, you'll like it!

*Mrs. Jordan and her "best friend," Vickie.*

*"He asked me, ' "when are you going to let me kiss you?' "*

*(Photos by Benjamin Murphy Phillips IV)*

## Holiday Hints

Here are a pair of colorful holiday notions: Deck a punch bowl full of cold creamy eggnog with greenery — in the form of lime sherbet scoops. A maraschino cherry atop each scoop makes the holiday color scheme even more so.

If you don't have a punch bowl, a tall pitcher with ribbons tied to the handle will do prettily for Peppermint Eggnog. It's a refreshing combination of 1 quart chilled dairy eggnog — that ready-to-serve hostess helper — and ¼ teaspoon peppermint extract.

Serve in glasses with candy canes or peppermint sticks for stirrers!