Ex-secretary, Elzora Williams directs a busy Labor Department office

WASHINGTON — In 1942, Mrs. Elozora Williams embarked on her federal career in the Nation's capital as a clerk typist with the Department of the Army at a yearly salary of $1,440.

Today, an $18,000-a-year public information specialist, she heads the inquiries office within the U.S. Labor Department's Employment and Training Administration (ETA), which sends out thousands of publications to the public each year.

"We are the central source for dissemination of ETA publications," she says, noting that there are more than 1,000 publications, reports and articles dealing with jobs, training programs and related activities of this Labor Department agency.

The publications are of special interest not only to blacks, other minority groups and the disadvantaged, but also to a wide cross section of the public, she adds. Requests also come in from sponsors of training programs, various governmental agencies, community action groups, universities, congressional offices and students.

Mrs. Williams has worked with other federal agencies, but since 1952 she has been with the Labor Department "because this was where I wanted to work," she says. She was named to head the Inquiries Office in 1969.

She says: "I've nurtured this office from its start when we averaged 200 pieces of mail a week. Now we average 650 and hit peaks of 1,500 pieces of mail per week."

In addition, there are telephone calls and visitors seeking information.

"It's a challenge to keep abreast of all ETA publications, other Labor Department publications as well as the whole range of other federal programs and various publications," Mrs. Williams adds.

How does she do it? By "reading everything" and with a keen "inner instinct" based on a broad knowledge of ETA and other federal programs.

Mrs. Williams admits to having felt "blocked in" as a secretary, but she always did her job with pride and professionalism.

"I was interested in my jobs, and I asked questions about the various programs." And she would encourage all employes, especially those who feel they are in "dead-end jobs" to follow that same work ethic.

"There's no substitute for learning and doing a job well," she emphasizes.

She also credits her supervisors for encouraging her and for taking the time and effort to explain the various programs.

"Now we have career development programs, upward mobility and an Equal Employment Opportunity Office," she says, pointing to some notable changes since her first federal position.

Her secretarial experience, coupled with an exellent memory of "manpower" and related program transitions over the years, she notes, have been the basis for that "inner instinct" in fulfilling the public's requests.

Says Mrs. Williams: "Basically, I'm people-oriented. I want the public to get good service, and I want the public to have a good image of the Laboratory Department."

And she does it with an affable manner which has long been her trademark.

KEEPING AMERICA INFORMED — Elzora Williams reviews part of the daily mail received from the public requesting publications and other informational materials prepared by the U.S. Labor Department's Employment and Training Administration. A former secretary, she now heads a unit responsible for the dissemination of materials regarding programs and activities under the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act.

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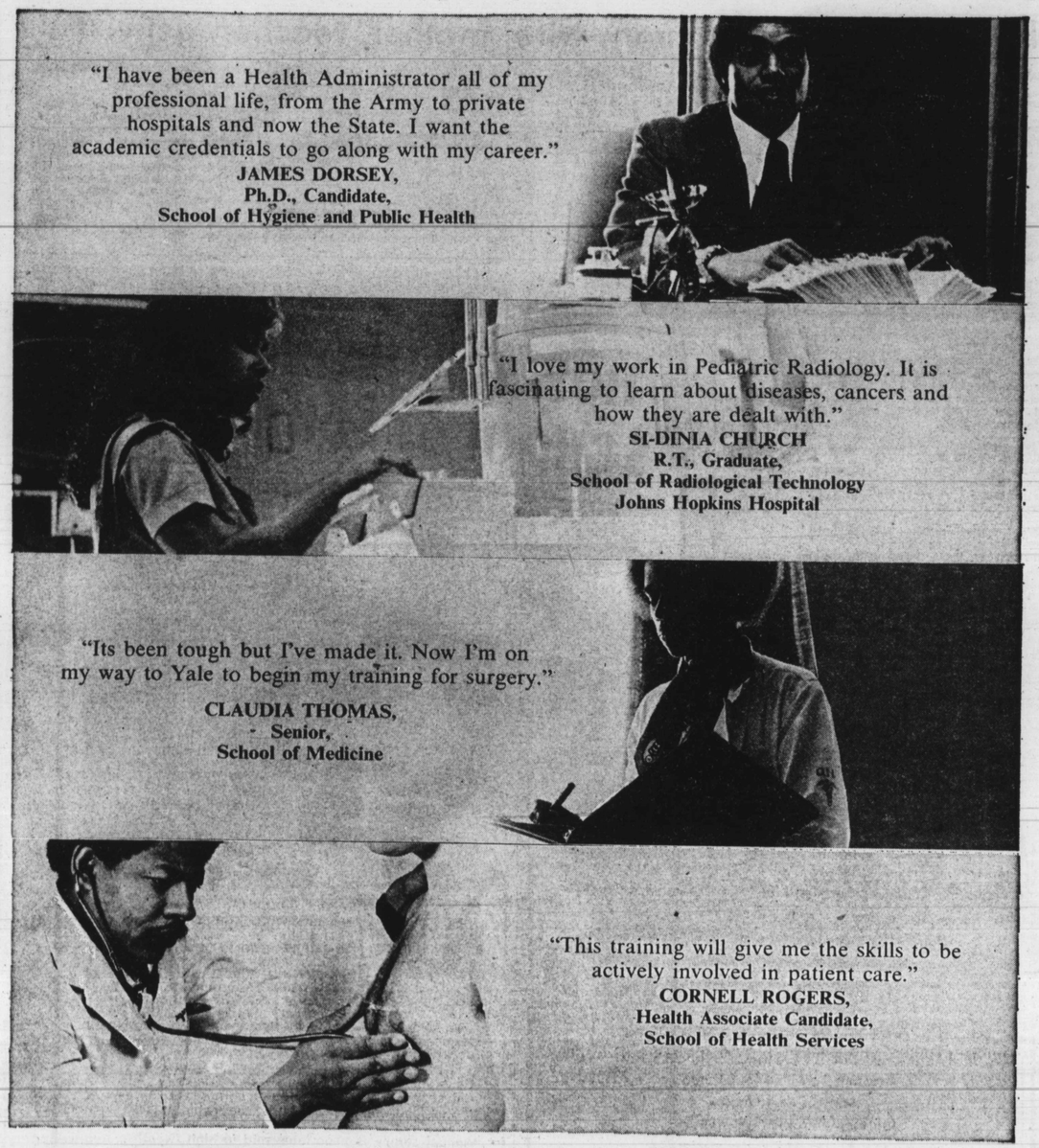

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