

Mrs. Johnson Polices Police While Trying to Help Them

JOHNSON, From B1

Born in a "wide spot in the road" in Arkansas an indeterminate number of years ago, she came to Washington in 1956, after quitting the WACS.

"I always wanted to work in the corrections (prison, parole and probation) field," she says, but hard practicalities steered her toward cosmetology and the beauty parlor business.

But her consuming preoccupation is the police. Known to virtually every police official and recognized on sight by many of the city's 4,900 rank-and-file officers, her daily life is a series of meetings, phone calls and impromptu protests on police issues. Police who know her quickly develop strong feelings—they either love her or despise her.

"But that's the way I would have it," she says. "When strong feelings are running, things get done."

In recent weeks, she has led small demonstrations at the Sixth Police District stationhouse in far Northeast protesting the fatal shooting of a local resident by police and circulated petitions at the Fourth District stationhouse on upper Georgia Avenue NW demanding a public inquiry into alleged police abuses there.

Many police officials maintain that her complaints of police brutality and maladministration are hopelessly entangled in hearsay, innuendo and misinformation.

That may be true at times, concedes one Johnson supporter, Philip J. Rutledge, former D.C. human resources department director and close associate of Mayor Walter E. Washington.

But it is important to have those kinds of people raising hell in the community," he said, "to help bring needed change. . . . Some of their charges may be grossly exaggerated, but there is enough substance to justify remedial action."

In 1956, as she tells it, Goldie Johnson was an unhappy young WAC at Ft. Dix, N.J., and she wanted a transfer to the Air Force.

Her requests were repeatedly turned down, so she called the White House in Washington for help and arranged later to come here.

"All they gave me was an appointment with some aide when I got here," she says, but I raised so much Cain that I guess they decide the only thing to do was let Gen. Eisenhower see me.

There followed an unscheduled 15-minute audience at which WAC Pat. Goldie Johnson pleaded her case before the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces.



Mrs. Johnson cradles a telephone while combing hair of Marian Webb at her 11th Street NW beauty parlor.

"He said he would check into it," she recalls and she left the White House triumphant.

As with the White House adventure in her WAC days 17 years ago, Goldie Johnson takes the direct route in seeking redress, heading a wide path to the doors of high police officials, District Building executives and selected lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

These include Del. Walter E. Fauntroy (D-D.C.) and Sen. Birch Bayh (D-Ind.) in Congress, Martin K. Schaller, executive secretary in Mayor Washington's office, and several ranking aides close to Metropolitan Police Chief Jerry V. Wilson.

It's an impressive track on which she runs, but observers in and out of government are not unanimous on how many races she has won.

Though she has helped many individual officers through personal scrapes, "she really doesn't carry much weight on broad policy matters," says one Dis-

trict Building insider who asked not to be named. "She issues outrageous press releases and says excessive things, but she certainly is not a mover and shaker here."

At the police department level, her two most common targets are Deputy Chief Maurice Cullinane, commander of the city's 3,000-member uniformed patrol division, and James M. Murray, chief of administrative services and the department's highest ranking civilian. Both men pride themselves on their "open door" policy and say Goldie Johnson is as welcome as any other citizen in their offices—but no more so.

Chief Wilson says flatly he does "not see Goldie Johnson." For her part, Mrs. Johnson snorts. "I don't have time to chase after the chief."

In the District Building, Mayor Washington "really doesn't take her too seriously," said one aide to the mayor. "He has an easy, friendly way, stopping to

chat with her in the hall and that kind of thing, but he does not meet with her on formal matters of his office."

Schaller, who processes police disciplinary trial board paperwork for the mayor, says Mrs. Johnson sees or calls him frequently on specific cases and asks for information on police administrative matters.

"I think she really helps a lot of individual officers in getting through the bureaucracy. The officers are often shy or don't know the ropes."

Other opinions of Goldie Johnson's effectiveness vary widely. "She is emerging as the conscience of the police department and is becoming increasingly effective," states Fauntroy, who says he has personally taken some of her grievances to the police hierarchy and obtained relief.

"She's a fine gadfly," he says. "She's a product of the media," counters Deputy Chief Cullinane. "The media

has projected the idea that if she makes a complaint against us, it'll be fixed automatically, and that just is not true."

She "simply picks up the option of going in to see officials that other people don't take advantage of," says Cullinane. "She comes

in here all the time, but she has absolutely no entree. . . . The myth that she has pull here is exactly that—a myth."

"She has certainly been effective from time to time," says Rutledge, now policy analysis director for the National League of Cities and U.S. Conference of Mayors here.

But, he says, because her effort on a particular issue is often part of a more general thrust by a group of organizations and individuals, it is difficult to say when she is solely or even primarily responsible for any changes or improvements that occur.

For this reason and also the confidentiality of personal records, most officials were reluctant to specify examples of her success in righting wrongs in the police establishment.

Most District Building and Capitol Hill observers of Mrs. Johnson say she has little access to high officials aside from perfunctory and within-channel approaches, but a few disagree.

"She had a direct line to me," says Clinton Mitchell, one-time police-community trouble shooter for the D.C. human rights office and now an official in the U.S. Marshal Service, "and I could get things done in the District Building, including going directly to the mayor—morning, noon or night."

On "numerous occasions," says Fauntroy, he has written letters to Chief Wilson (with carbon copy to Mayor Washington) on complaints from specific police officers brought to his attention by Mrs. Johnson.

The department has frequently responded in a "positive way" and "corrected the matter," he

says, while in some cases it has refused. He would not cite specific examples.

Many cases involve apparently unfair dismissals of officers, especially black officers, during their first-year probationary period on the force, Fauntroy said.

"The things brought to my attention by Goldie," he said, "have caused me to suspect that some officials in the hierarchy are still disposing of as many black recruits as possible in the probationary period." The police department denies this.

Fauntroy says he receives "numerous" telephone calls from Mrs. Johnson and meets with her personally on police matters three or four times a year.

Few other doors are open to Mrs. Johnson on Capitol Hill, but one is that of Sen. Bayh.

"She gets a hard time from a lot of the other offices around here," said one Bayh assistant, and even though Bayh's committee assignments do not bear directly on police matters (he is chairman of the Senate District appropriations subcommittee), "we have a

very personal way of dealing with people who come to us."

"Goldie brings us complaints, and many of them are substantial," says Gordon Alexander, a Bayh aide handling D.C. community affairs.

"We never call the police" or apply other direct pressure, he said. "We refer complaints to us as a matter of practice to the mayor" who in turn may make a formal inquiry at the police department.

Several dismissed officers have been reinstated through this process, says Alexander.

Mrs. Johnson views her own task as a difficult one, producing results slowly, "even when you go to the top for help."

She learned that lesson 17 years ago when she sought President Eisenhower's assistance on her transfer from the WACS. Asked if he ultimately helped her, she said, "Well while he was checking out, I decided to go into cosmetology instead, so I just didn't know what he was going to do."

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Alexandria Gets Planning Chief

Alexandria City Manager Wayne F. Anderson has announced the appointment of David R. Cooper as director of the city's new combined department of city planning and development.

Cooper, 42, who will arrive Oct. 22 to accept the \$24,877-a-year post, will be the first head of the consolidated unit, composed of the present housing and community develop-

ment department and the department of planning and regional affairs. Now an assistant director of planning for the St. Paul, Minn., housing authority, Cooper has a master's degree in planning from Harvard University and previously was involved in redevelopment, marketing and planning in Pittsburgh and Evanston, Ill.

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