

## The Quixotic Adventure of the Church Ladies

*By Donna Bishop*

Could there be any more noble idea than providing boxes of food to a single mom, her newborn baby and her three-year-old twins? The church had received a call from this desperate woman who was unable to work and had nothing to feed her children or provide for the baby. It took only a few well-placed calls and the good women of the church went into action emptying their own shelves to feed those more in need. Money was collected for fresh vegetables, meats, milk, and provisions for the baby. This completed phase one of the project.

Now the women faced a real challenge. How would the boxes be delivered and by whom? The problem was this family lived in the most unacceptable downtown public housing complex in our southern community. Their neighborhood had daily reports of violent street shootings, drug deals, working women on every corner, and uncontrolled youth gangs. This was certainly not a place for the good church ladies. However we had a mission and onward we Christian women would march. Two of us ladies volunteered to carry the banner, thankfully a southern gentleman offered to escort us to our destination. The deeper we penetrated the urban jungle the more apprehensive the three of us became, but our noble duty propelled us forward. Such sights we had not seen: burned out apartments, boarded up vacant buildings, empty lots with abandoned cars and trash.

We located the address only to discover the family lived on a second floor apartment up a very narrow steep set of stairs. There was no answer to our knock as we nervously viewed our surroundings. The second knock brought a muffled sound to which we responded that we were from the church with food. The young woman opened the door to admit us and our loaded boxes. The apartment was poorly furnished but very clean. We returned to the car for a second load of donations while our driver guarded his expensive car. We were beginning to attract attention in the neighborhood. We spoke briefly with the single mom and wished her well.

We turned to leave when suddenly we could hear heavy feet ascending on the steep stairwell followed by demanding pounding on the door to the apartment. Before the woman could reach the door it flew open and two armed policemen pushed into the room. It would be hard to say who looked the most shocked! The woman and the policemen were not total strangers to each other but these two well-dressed suburban housewife types were in the wrong place! The police quickly searched the apartment for the woman's boyfriend who was a wanted criminal. Thankfully he was not found hiding under the bed. The policemen then addressed the two of us with, "Who the hell are you two?" We stammered, "Church ladies," to which he shouted, "Get the hell out!" and we did!