

Peggy W. Pulleyn, 85, Founder Of Child Development Institute

By WOLFGANG SAXON

Peggy Wattles Pulleyn, whose grandchild's ill fortune moved her to found the Princeton Child Development Institute in 1970, died on Dec. 8 in a freakish accident near her home in Oldwick, N.J. She was 85.

According to the Somerset County Prosecutor's office, she was walking on a road in Bedminster when a car driven by a longtime friend, Allison Ewing, backing up to meet her, lurched out of control and struck her. No charges were filed against Mrs. Ewing, 76, who is the wife of New Jersey's senior State Senator, John H. Ewing of Bernardsville.

The institute in Princeton, now caring for about 40 autistic children, has grown into a nationally recognized center that has served as a model elsewhere in the country. Its science-based program, backed by research and staff training, was recognized by the Federal Government in 1983 when it cited the Institute as one of 60 exemplary private schools in the country.

Mrs. Pulleyn felt the need for such a school in 1968 when her family realized that her first grandson, Rolie, was autistic, a still-enigmatic condition with many associated disorders. Her search for a suitable program to help the child led her, her daughter and some other parents in the Princeton region to start their own school.

From modest beginnings with 17 children, the institute moved into its own home in Princeton, where a further addition was completed this year. Mrs. Pulleyn was an original

board member and continued to help guide its development.

She served as its longtime chairwoman, raising funds for the state-supported institute. Up to her death, she remained active on the board, and was likewise active in another charitable project to which she devoted much effort for half a century: the Magic Shop in Oldwick.

Founded just after World War II, it is a gift shop that initially assisted returning veterans. Since then, it has been a financial supporter of the nearby Bonnie Brae Home for Boys, a boarding institution that teaches troubled children academic subjects and trade skills.

Mrs. Pulleyn, an amateur artist, contributed her work and staffed the counter to sell from the Magic Shop's wide variety of children's clothing, leather goods and other handmade materials. The day before her death, she was at the shop to suit up its Santa for the season, one of the founders, Elizabeth Schley, said.

Peggy Wattles grew up in Buffalo and graduated from Bennett Junior College in Millbrook, N.Y. She was an outstanding amateur golfer who won New York State championships in the 1930's and twice reached the quarterfinals of the United States Women's National Golf Tournament.

She is survived by her daughter, Pamela Pulleyn Machold of Princeton; a brother, Gurdon W. Wattles of Oldwick; a sister, Elizabeth Wattles of Hightstown, N.J., and three grandchildren. Her husband of 55 years, Robert F. Pulleyn, a lawyer, died in 1990.