

Actor Wants To See More Negroes Playing On Broadway

MAURICE ELLIS HOPES 1945 WILL BRING BETTER UNITY ALONG THEATRE ROW

BY DOLORES CALVIN

NEW YORK CITY (CNS) — Maurice Ellis, the Negro actor, is not only a member of the Negro community but also a member of the Broadway community. He is one of the few Negroes who are playing on Broadway today.

Ellis is playing the part of a young man in the Broadway production "Goodbye, Mr. Tom."

Ellis has played the part of a young man in the Broadway production "Goodbye, Mr. Tom."

Ellis has always had a faith in the Negro actor and in the American stage. His first drama on the great white way, was "Men To Sea" which closed after three weeks.

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very stage for a few seconds looking very wise until it came back to him. He learned his lesson. Now, with several radio appearances to make a week, he can afford to forget!

The amazing thing about Ellis is that he owns a marvelous deep bass baritone. His grandfather was an inspiration and taught him all he knew. Ellis sings "Water Boy" and "Deep River" with all the polish of his idol, Paul Robeson.

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with the modern twist of his favorite, Nelson Eddy. That deep voice helps him on the Broadway stage; it gives him the independence he needs.

Ellis is a dill wife of nine years. Bertha, a former model, lives in a spacious 5 room apartment at 450 West 147th Street. They have no children. He loves steaks, hates pipes and coffee — smokes cigarettes from a special filtered holder so as not to ruin his voice.

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He devotes 3 to 4 hours to singing and playing around on the piano. While Bertha is busy designing her own clothes, Maurice keeps his radio appointments. And, occasionally, when "tinkering" with the radio at home — getting it out of order — she'll be downtown buying his ties and shirts which she insists are beautiful.

Maurice Ellis, in planning the future of the Negro in the theatre, hasn't overlooked his own future. He and Bertha want a country home where he can splutter around in the back yard in old clothes and watch the progress of the world.

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BASIL SPEARS

A Second Hazel Scott Is On The Way To Fame

BY DOLORES CALVIN

NEW YORK CITY (C) — An ambitious, dark-eyed, Oklahoma-born pianist, Miss Basil Spears, is fast becoming a close runner-up to Hazel Scott.

Hazel, as you know, now resigns over all boogie woogie playing the classics first straight, then pouring their individual personalities into the keys, bringing forth the novelty and exhibiting their own greatness.

Basil is 23, she's played since she can remember. Rev. B. J. Spears, her father, pastor of the Mt. Rose Baptist Church in Tulsa, had a lot to do with her career. It was in his church that she learned the organ, in addition to the piano, and derived from it a keen sense of appreciation for classic and chorale works.

Basil then majored in music at Talledega College where she finished in 1941. Finding her talents definitely a la Scott, she struck out in the field by playing 8 months at Monroe's Uptown House, 2 months at Hotel Bills in Utica, N. Y., a summer in Atlantic City, 8 months on a USO tour, 8 weeks at Lindseys, a return date for 15 more weeks and 8 weeks at Tondaleys.

in New York. The western bias is now fingering through 16 week at Washington's Bengasi Club.

HOBBY IS MUSIC — For relaxation, Basil can play a good game of tennis and basketball, but she records most her collection of records, many of which are classics. She, too, puts accent on clothes and cosmetics, feeling that an artist before the public must look her best always.

The boys, especially those she's entertained on her USO tour, adore her. But Basil isn't yet engaged and emphatically denies interest. However, we think that the someone will be included in the young lady's post war plans.

She likes earrings and young red nail polish. And she enjoys losing herself in a "morning of madness" by rushing patterned black and white keys together — Spears style!

Modest Basil laughs if you rate her with Dorothy Donegan, the Chicago wonder who rose from \$8 a week to a Hollywood movie and a Broadway success. But Basil, like Dorothy, is "up and coming." In fact, the score reads Scott, Donegan and Spears!

Yes, right now Hazel is septan queen of the ivories. But with her own unique technique and likeable mannerisms, it won't be long before Basil Spears, too, has the keys to the kingdom!

Mid-Night Man In Chicago

BY TED WATSON

EL GROTO SNEAK PREVIEW. CHICAGO (CNS) — With great fan fare, the opening of Charles Cole and Harry Fields' newest night club venture, the El Grotto, proved to be the most important event (and preview) of this year.

From this sneak preview alone and which was augmented at midnight last Thursday, this column avows that El Grotto will be Chicago's greatest supper club.

Brashaw, his superb showman encased by numerous caesthetics and his celebrated orchestra. The floor revue, a gigantic one, produced by Joe "Ziggy" Johnson, is loaded with name talent that is tops.

Jessye Scott, the blonde bombshell of rhythm, is in the starring position. This great little song and dance stylist, with much "nesses," danced and sublimated his way into the hearts of the previewers.

Oliver Brown known as the princess of the blues, and who recently closed at the Zombie Club in Detroit, proved in song that she has a right to her title. She is a sultry-blower who commands you to listen. Her singing repeats of the last few words in each sentence, especially "A Mistake In Life," are great and she must be tabbed for tops in 1945.

FLAUNTIER FOR ALL: The bluecolaters, noted for tom fullery in song and dance, must be acknowledged "tops" in this revue. Ritz Brothers and the Three Stoges notwithstanding — Johnny Tay-

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BETTY VOORHEES

Former Beautician To Make Town Hall Debut

NEW YORK CITY (C) — New York's hundreds of beauticians as well as many others throughout the country, are all agog over the coming Town Hall debut of one of their former co-workers, Betty Voorhees.

When asked why she deserted great possibilities in the musical world and will make her initial appearance at the famous auditor-

I'VE BEEN AROUND New York By Ted Yates

By Ted Yates

Speaking of Pin-Up Favorites . . .

At last I've become a Pin-Up Favorite. The other night, on the way home I was attacked by — not one, not two, but three unidentified thugs. Clipped on the lower lip and knoked on the head. They were after my swag. They were unsuccessful because when they knocked me to the pavement I was sitting on my you-know-what, my wallet.

In the skirmish I felled one of the ruffians. A cop who arrived on the scene picked me up bodily. PINNED ME UP against a railing. The cut-throat when I had downed made his escape due to the accusations of a bushybody old lady who, pointing to me, blubbered out, "He's a crook. I saw him attack that poor old man!"

Later at the station house for several hours identical discomfiture was the theme until I was released in the custody of the Negro cop who wouldn't let them fence me in.

I think it's a good time now for me to challenge Jean Parks, even though she obtained her claim to the title by virtue of being selected as the favorite pin-up of the 35th Station Hospital "Somewhere Along the Burma Road." After all, the local police are a bit nearer and, like being the favorite of New York's Finest . . . On the other hand, Louis Armstrong with his Orchestra has become an entertainment choice with diversion seekers who frequent the Cafe Zanzibar where Carl Erbe put on something like a press agent's dream with that "election" for top billing simply because the show is so star-studded.

Hilda Simms and Canada Lee, who both have made a niche along the Gay White Way because of their splendid performance in "Anna Lucasta" have been chosen as "The Most Praiseworthy" by this writer. The collie's favorite Pin-Ups, no less.

And we're now going to doff our hats to a pair of girls who sport top hats — they're the favorites, these two. To Gladys Bentley, whose suggestive parodies at Tondaleys has given 52nd Street its scorching hot-chile fire, and to Adelaide Hall — the former "Blackbird" star — who has become the sweetheart of Negro soldiers stationed in London, England, we offer hearty congratulations . . . Incidentally, another favorite, Pearl Primus, is doing quite alright at the Roxy Theatre, where she is appearing in a strictly Cafe Society presentation . . . And up at Harlem's Apollo Theatre last week "Hot Lips" Page turned on the heat as did Billie Holiday . . . White House beauty, Billy Ford, of Tiny Bradshaw's Ork, will soon lead his own band — the hit tune continues to be "Making Believe." And that's my favorite, too!

So, meet the Pin-Up Favorite of New York's Finest. Ah, but I am!

And, remember Ted Bald — Yaver (Pollard) Allen, of Philadelphia, visiting her sister, Bessie Williams of this city for the holidays. Edna Williams, the okey, and bobby Clyde Hart, the arranger, did not reconcile — as was rumored . . . The reason for playboy Victor Lloyd's sudden "disappearance" is that he is touring with Frederic March — if that's news . . . Ella Fitzgerald's newest accompanist (Kenny Waters) has given "The First Lady of Song" what is termed along the Rialto as an "upbeat" with a downbeat . . . And Grady Cortis, the general manager at the Cafe Moulon-Touge (Mike's to you), insists that the ladies and gentlemen who are diversion seekers, would do well to frequent Curtis, a modest fellow, did not say-but, I'll tell you — that Mike's is a Harlem legend. It is popularly accepted that here on more than one occasion every known celebrity assembled on a single evening . . . For you, my friends, Koldin, Marjorie and Sailor, Wave or Wac — to you men and women behind the men behind the gun — to every one of you a Happy New Year is what I'm wishing you. If you believe in Santa Claus, it's my wish that you will be granted your every wish.

New York Showfronts

BY DON DE LEIGHBUD

WHY DON'T OUR BAND LEADERS FORM AN ORGANIZATION AND BUY THEIR OWN BALLROOMS, NIGHTCLUBS, AND THEATRES?

NEW YORK — It is a darn shame that so many thousands of dollars, in fact millions, are changing hands annually in the swing music field with few Negro names even touching it.

For example, there are few Negro-owned theatres in the country. Most are owned by white men and Negroes support them.

Yet, we have five or six Negro orchestras which are top money-makers like Count Basie, Earl Ellington, Cab Calloway, Jimmy Lunceford, Lucky Millinder, and Louis Armstrong.

It could be done on a small scale. There are enough tobacco bars for sale or lease in Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

The payoff would be five times as great if a collective effort were made to solve the problem instead



MAURICE ELLIS

of each fellow going for himself on the idea that his program alone is worthy of his attention. There could be a similar situation regarding theatres. We have enough top money makers among our theatrical big names to buy theatres in Negro communities. At least in many of our large cities, the earnings of Bill Robinson, Ethel Waters, Ella Fitzgerald, the Mills Brothers, and others could be pooled to build Negro-owned and operated theatres in Chicago, New York, Detroit, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, Washington, and in cities throughout the South if someone had the vision and courage to take up the proposition. However, with booking agents taking abnormal percentages and with many of our bands and acts on a day to day living policy there is no wonder that the whites are gradually taking over completely in the entertainment world insofar as the managerial part of it is concerned.

GIVING OURSELVES A CHANCE. The proper use of the power represented in the earnings of our top theatrical figures should be put to far better use than it is. It is all right to play a theatre and break somebody's record and get a lot of publicity for it and it is another thing to break such a record and invest the earnings into ventures worthwhile and, thus, give Negroes a chance of something they have helped make great. There is no excuse under those circumstances for a handful of big theatre owners controlling the source of livelihood in various cities for Negro attractions and there is no excuse for Negro band leaders not getting together and forming some kind of association and organization to take up these problems and act upon them. A whole lot of publicity means nothing insofar as doing a race any good and certainly the reckless squandering of funds on whiskey, women, and questionable pleasures isn't doing the profession any good.

What we need are more fellows with the ideas of Earl Hines and the late Walter Barnes. They are and were more concerned with permanency and forcing the dear old white man to pay for their services than in day to day living policy there is no wonder that the whites are gradually taking over completely in the entertainment world insofar as the managerial part of it is concerned.

combe Avenue where they have a penthouse. It's the highest apartment spot in New York! So when Muriel walked in, she found Dick standing in the middle of the room, surrounded by boxes . . . And with the shortage of help, the two were busy as beavers.

After the cleaning episode, the Campbells toured the theatre, visiting "Harvey," "Song of Norway," "Bloomer Girl" and "Oklahoma!" It was her first REAL holiday, she says . . . THE ROVING REPORTER: Katherine Duhamm received good notices for her Tropical revue, "Monroe's Uptown House," 2 months at Hotel Bills in Utica, N. Y., a summer in Atlantic City, 8 months on a USO tour, 8 weeks at Lindseys, a return date for 15 more weeks and 8 weeks at Tondaleys (the kingdom).

HILDA SIMMS TO HELP BENNETT COLLEGE ENDOWMENT RALLY GREENSBORO (C) — Hilda Simms, star of "Anna Lucasta," is flying to Bennett College January 7th to appear on the college's endowment rally.

With Al Capone were severed, he went on his own and, at the time of his death, owned outright four huge buses which he rented for pictures and traveling from town to town in the South, had a whole retinue of Negro business representatives, publicity men, arrangers, advertising men, and other personnel, and was working out a program to give Negro songwriters a break in his rapidly expanding Negro entertainment enterprise, when he was burned to death in Miss.

Erskine Hawkins pictured above with His Celebrated Orchestra, with lovely Eric Smith (inset left); alto sax king and male vocalist Jimmy Mitchell (inset right), are currently appearing on a tour of one-nighters after the musical aggregation's engagement extraordinary at Joe Morris' Plantation Club in Los Angeles. Hawkins, by the way, was the first name band leader to appear at the L. A. niter, after its gala opening about two years ago.

Young Man With A Horn Scores With Band

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20 HITS! The pages of a memorable book pour their magic into a great and thrilling motion picture — A. J. CRONIN'S THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM, with GREGORY PECK, THOMAS MITCHELL, VINCENT PRICE, ROSA STRADNER, JEDDY MCDOWALL, EDMUND GWEENE, SIR CEDRIC HARDWICKE, PEGGY ANN GARNER, JANE BALL, JAMES GLEASON and others! The Army Air Forces' own great stage show comes zooming to the screen — MOSS HART'S WINGED VICTORY, produced by DARRYL F. ZANUCK, directed by GEORGE CUKOR, with a great cast! WATCH FOR THEM ON THE SCREEN!