

Author vying for Image Award

BY T. KEVIN WALKER
THE CHRONICLE

Carole Boston Weatherford got a heads-up last week on some of the biggest news of her life from her husband, Ron.

Ron Weatherford told his wife that an intriguing-looking letter from the NAACP Image Awards would soon be delivered to their High Point home.

It wasn't a prediction. Ron Weatherford works as a mailman and often takes a peak at what will be waiting for him when he gets home.

"He said, 'It might be a nomination, but don't get your hopes up,'" Weatherford recalled last week.

The letter did in fact inform Weatherford that she had been nominated for one of the prestigious awards for her children's book "The Sound That Jazz Makes." The book will face strong contenders in the children's literature category, including books written by famed entertainer Debbie Allen and Stedman Graham, Oprah Winfrey's longtime beau.

Weatherford has several children's books under her belt, many of which she has won other awards for. But this is her very first NAACP Image Award nomination. The awards are given to those who promote positive aspects of black life in music, film, television and literature.

Weatherford is grateful just for the recognition.

"It was the best Christmas present I could have gotten," she said.

"The Sound That Jazz Makes" was released a few months ago to critical praise. Weatherford used a rhythmic poetry style for the words in the book, a style that is driven home to audiences when she reads excerpts from the book at Triad schools and libraries.

Weatherford wrote the book so that youngsters, especially African-American youngsters, could get insight into the music that helped to shape much of popular culture. Talk that jazz was a dying breed did not sit well with Weatherford, who grew up listening to the music.

"The history of jazz is not



Photo by Kevin Walker

Carole Weatherford Boston signs a copy of her NAACP Image Award-nominated book.

something that we can afford to ignore," she said.

Weatherford is well known in the Triad not only for the many children's titles that bear her name. She is a former editor of The Chronicle and a current columnist for the (Greensboro) News & Record. Weatherford also often does freelance journalism work for various magazines.

But writing books has become her first love, even though she sees trends in the world of publishing that she does not particularly like. Weatherford says it is becoming increasingly hard to get your books promoted and stocked if you don't have a name that most people recognize. It's why, she said, that many publishing companies offer huge advances to celebrities to try their hands at writing.

"If people recognize the name of the author, that can determine whether your book gets displayed with the spine out or with its cover out," Weatherford said.

The celebrity-driven nature of the industry, Weatherford added, means that great books are often buried in bookstores. Name recognition or not, Weatherford is already forging ahead with several projects.

She is working on a children's

book about black lawyers, a topic that she is well versed on. Weatherford once served as communications director for the National Bar Association.

She's working on a children's story about the Princeville floods as well. The book will look at the tragedy through a child's eyes. It's a perspective that many people overlooked during the deadly floods.

"It's a story that children need to hear about....Children were an integral part of that story," she said.

The NAACP Image Award ceremony will be held in early March. Members of the NAACP nationwide will determine the winners in each of the categories by sending in ballots in the current issue of Crisis magazine, the civil rights organization's official publication.

Weatherford admits that she used to ignore the ballots each year when they appeared in the magazine. Not so this year. She's well aware of the stiff competition she has; she has even read many of their books. But Weatherford is hoping that her Triad neighbors will help her bring home the bronze prize.

"I hope people will want to vote for a homegirl if they are NAACP members," she said with a chuckle.

Lineup set for MLK showcase

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The N.C. Black Repertory Company has selected an array of talented artists to perform during the company's 16th annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration. It will be held on Monday, Jan. 15, at 7 p.m. in the Arts Council Theatre, 610 Coliseum Drive in Winston-Salem. The event is free and the entire Triad is invited to attend.

Because of the enormous turnout of past celebrations, reservations are recommended. Call the Black Rep's office at 723-2266 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m.

The MLKJ Birthday Celebration will be hosted by WXII news anchor Wanda Starke.

Starke joined NewsChannel 12 in January 1994. Her broadcasting career has taken her from her hometown of Newport News, Va., to such cities as Norfolk, Buffalo and Los Angeles.

A graduate of the University of Richmond and Howard University Graduate School, she finds the most enjoyment in "meeting extraordinary people and sharing their inspiring stories with our viewers."

Widely recognized for her advocacy and volunteer work, she was awarded the 1999 National Big Sister of the Year by Big Brothers Big Sisters.

This year marks her debut as host for the annual MLKJ celebration.

Special youth performances by 12-year-old singer Clara Mixon and gospel vocalist Bethany Heath will be featured in this year's celebration. Mixon was a runner-up in the McDonald's Showtime at the Apollo Talent Search. Having grown up in the theater and music worlds, Heath has become quite an accomplished vocalist.

Other youth performances highlighting this year's celebration include the dynamic Glorious

Sounds Jazz Ensemble, a five-piece brass combo and the A.W. McCloud Ensemble under the leadership of Cassandra McCloud. This celebration is especially designed for the youths of the community to be shared with their families.

Jan. 15 is the actual birthday of King although the national holiday is celebrated on the third Monday of January. This year marks the rare occurrence where the national holiday and actual birth date fall on the same day.

For at least 10 years, the Black Rep was the only organization in Winston-Salem celebrating Dr. King's actual birthday on the 15th. Larry Leon Hamlin and other artists of the area thought it would be appropriate for artists to show their appreciation for King on his actual birthday by using their artistic talents in celebration of the profound contributions for such a great member of humanity.

Johnson retires from library

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Annie P. Johnson, mother of National Black Theatre Festival producer Larry Leon Hamlin, recently retired from the Forsyth County Public Library after 20 years of service. She worked on the lower level of the audiovisual/circulation department of the Central Library on Fifth Street.

She was given a retirement reception by the Central Library that was attended not only by staff members but also by many of



Johnson

the patrons she has served. Many patrons who checked out books or returned materials to the lower circulation desk probably know "Ms. Annie," as she was affectionately known. She had a kind word to all those who passed her desk.

Johnson said that she will sincerely miss the smiles on the faces of

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Wynn

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ability to work well with at-risk students or an ability to effectively teach a class with large numbers of students.

"You can be the catalyst for change," he said.

Teachers working in concert sharing the skills they are best at can help to create a better school environment for all parties. He urged them to always look for solutions to problems rather than throwing their hands up and admitting defeat.

"The worst thing you can say is that I can't teach these kids," Wynn

said.

Wynn was received warmly by the crowd. Some shouted their agreement with words like "amen" and "all right." Before he gave the speech, Wynn had met with many of the teachers during workshop sessions, giving them insight into the art of being an educator.

The school system hosts the conference each year. Greg Thornton, an assistant superintendent, said the workshops motivate the teachers and give them an opportunity to network and share solutions. Such opportunities are abundant in other fields, but rare in education, Thornton said.

"We don't do enough of this in this profession," Thornton said.

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