

1B ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Black church's history at Afro Center

By Winfred B. Cross
THE CHARLOTTE POST

"You can't have black history without the black church," says Harry Harrison. "We've tried to, but it just doesn't work that way."

That's why Harrison, director of programs at the Afro-American Cultural Center, feels the center's latest exhibit, "Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The rise of Black Churches in Eastern American Cities, 1740 - 1877," is so important.

"Because of the historical content, people will come away well informed about the black church in America," he said. "That's what it gives you, a sense of where we came from."

The exhibit, on loan from the Smithsonian Institution's Anacostia Museum, chronicles the black church's humble beginnings from the Great Awakening to the end of Reconstruction.

Wall plaques containing information on some of black history's most respected members - Frederick Douglass, Richard Allen, James Varick and Sojourner Truth.

"You see the origins of universities (Livingstone College), the civil rights movement, the freedom fighters - they laid the foundation," Harrison said.

Some of the plaques are shaped as stained glass windows. A few are free-standing.



The Fisk Jubilee Singers were chiefly responsible for introducing black religious music.

All contain paints, lithographs, drawings or photos.

Ironically, the text of the exhibits points out black churches actually started in the South, despite fears of whites. The first congregations were formed from plantation slaves in Lunenburg and Williamsburg, Va., and Silver Bluff, S. C.

Between 1800 and 1860 the African Union Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal Church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and the American Baptist Missionary Convention all flourished.

Allen's A.M.E. denomination

grew the fastest. It also led the way in establishing independent black congregations throughout smaller towns.

The Afro Center could not have asked for better publicity. Evangelist Billy Graham will preach what will probably be part of his final crusade in Ericsson Stadium later this month. "That's probably going to bring some people down here," said Harry Harrison, program director for the center.

But Harrison wishes the other topic - church burnings - would go away.

"It was mentioned a lot dur-

ing the opening's reception Friday," he said. "Not just on what's happening but on the fact that it's never stopped. Church burning has always been a problem."

The center has even localized the exhibit. Photos of Matthews-Murkland Presbyterian Church, recently burned by a 13-year-old white female, are tucked discretely in a corner on the bottom floor. Sitting in front of the photos is a glass case containing debris of the burned church.

But Harrison is quick to point out the traveling

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By Jeri Young
THE CHARLOTTE POST



Good Hair: A Novel
Benilde Little
\$22
Simon & Schuster

Benilde Little wanted to pen a work about the black middle class. She wanted it to be funny, honest and a best seller. She accomplishes all of her goals with "Good Hair."

Excerpted in magazines long before it's publication, "Good Hair" is a good read.

The book borrows its title from the old African American misconception that there is such a thing as 'good hair,' is an in-depth look into the pretensions of the world of the BUPPIE - black urban professional - by Alice Andrews, who admits from the jump that she does not have good hair.

In spite of her upscale appearance and education, she is a Mount Holyoke grad, Alice remains at the periphery of New York's black bourgeoisie. She hails from Newark, a city that buppies look down on.

Alice's precarious position is further intensified by her relationship with Jack, a true African American blueblood. Jack hails from a long line of doctors.

Of course, Alice and Jack's relationships takes the normal twists and turns, but the book does manage to end on a relatively happy note.

"Good Hair," is also one of the funniest books out.

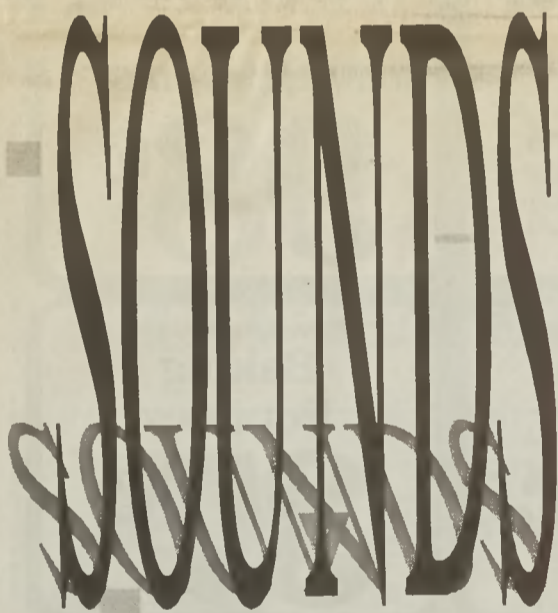
Harris takes on all of the bastions of Buppiedom, from fancy restaurants to boring parties, with BAPs (black African princesses), personified by Jack's ex-girlfriend, Sherry Steptoe.

Like all of the new 'black girlfriend' novels, there is a lot of disappointment for Alice and her best friend Cheryl, a successful college grad who gives up everything to follow a man, but overall, the book works.

Of course, there are some pitfalls.

There are really no great black men. Jack commits a cardinal sin and his best friend Jeff abuses his wife in a fit of rage.

But overall the book is great and well worth a glance.



By Myron K. Williams
SPECIAL TO THE POST

The anticipation of the P-Funk concert started when I woke up Sunday morning and it continued building throughout the day.

When I pulled into the Blockbuster Pavilion parking lot that evening, I could hear the crowd and feel it pulsating. Making my way to my seat I knew the mothership was going to land because everyone was there with the same purpose - to tear the roof off the mutha.

George Clinton, king of all the funk he surveys, is from Kannapolis, and he always gives extra when he comes home. King George brought some of the key Funk mobsters with him - Bernie Worrell (no other keyboardist can touch him), Bootsy (five-star rock star of a monster baby), Junie Morris and the Brides of Funkenstein. Darn! It took me back to my first P-Funk concert in the early '70s: George in his ever-present robe, Bootsy in his red splendor (pants and feather hat) and my boy in the white wedding dress. The band was tight, hitting all the right notes and kicking the vocals. It reminded me of playing all their albums on my parent's Hi-fi.

I haven't missed a P-Funk concert since the early '70s. I thought last year's Fort Mill concert was the ultimate because I ended up on stage. No, it wasn't. This year they landed the mothership not once, but twice. Collins emerged the second time signifying the Funk Opera was not over. Once finished, Collins made his way down the aisle looking out high fives. Naturally, being the funkateer I am, I threw a high five Bootsy's way. He grabbed my hand and we proceeded to hop toward the stage as the crowd chanted "We Want Bootsy." That was the ultimate. I'll tell my grandkids about it.

The opera started at 7 p.m. and ended somewhere near 11:15. This was the best P-Funk concert I've attended. It proved we are still "One Nation Under A Groove."

We want the funk!

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION / MARK PENDERGRASS AND MONTY RAMSUER



GEORGE CLINTON

WGIV personality Sunny White dies

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOSTON - Sunny Joe White, an African American radio personality who started his career with WGIV-FM Charlotte died this week of an apparent heart attack.

The former WXKS-FM (Boston) program director popularized that station's disco format in the late 1970s.

When White began his career in Charlotte with WGIV-FM, it was the first with an African American format. He worked with such radio legends as "Genial" Gene Potts, "Rockin'" Ray Gooding and "Chattie" Hattie Leeper.

"He was one of my beloved proteges," Leeper said. "I taught him a great deal about radio. He was very young when he started with the station. He was always interested in anything to do with records and the industry."

Leeper, chairman of Gaston College's communication department, said White once worked in a record shop she owned. She was shocked at his death.

"I had heard through the grapevine he was sick, but you never get used to death," Leeper said. "He was a sweet, sweet person."

WGIV is now WBAV-FM.

White started and ended his Boston radio career at WILD-AM, as an innovator in the music world.

"He did things before people thought they should be done," said fellow disc jockey and longtime friend Diana Steele, "Lady D" on WJMN-FM. White hired Steele as an intern at WXKS, "KISS," 15 years ago.

"He could see the future, I think; he knew what direction to go in," she said.

Friends said White, who grew up in Charlotte, was hospitalized after a heart attack last week, but returned to his Boston home. He was pronounced dead there late Saturday.

"He was just the nicest guy," said "Kid David" Corey, whom White also hired at WXKS.

"He was always smiling, even when he was mad at you or didn't like something you did on the air, he was smiling," Corey, who still works at the station, said.

"Sunny joked around a lot about how he started the careers of many people ... but he really did," said WILD program director Ken Johnson, whose own career is among them. "He called them his kids and he got a lot of kids in the business."

"Sunny slept, ate and drank radio," Johnson said. "He loved the business and he loved music and this was definitely the business for him to be in."

White began his career in Boston at WILD in 1978 and moved to WXKS in 1979 as its program director. He stayed there, hosting morning and night shows, until 1990. He then worked at the former WZOU-FM, now WJMN, until 1992. He was a programming consultant for WILD and had an on-air show there at the time of his death.

"It's really impacting this city in a tremendous way," Steele said of White's death. "People looked toward him as an innovator."

"He was a really nice guy - a sweetheart. He was good to people."

Winfred B. Cross also contributed to this story.