



Members of Carver School Class of 1964 who attended the worship service.

Members of Carver Class of 1964 worship at Goler Metropolitan

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The Carver School Class of 1964 culminated a 40th anniversary weekend of celebration activities at Goler Metropolitan AME Zion Church on Sunday, June 13. Rev. William Conrad, a member of the Class

of '64, was the host minister. Class Co-President Dr. Francis Manns gave the Invocation, followed by the history of the class, from what was formerly known as Carver Consolidated School. John F. Rice recognized the deceased members with the lighting of the com-

memorative candle. About 25 members of the Class of '64 and their families and guests were welcomed for an inspiring message from the minister. A reception by the congregation followed. Cynthia Warren Cunningham acknowledged the welcome on behalf of

the class. Any members of the classes of 1964 from Anderson, Atkins and Paisley who are interested in participating in a joint community project are asked to contact Dr. Francis Manns Jr. at (336) 661-0164 or John F. Rice at (336) 705-5428.

Sharpton

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from FOX (News) and other networks that are campaigning for George Bush," Sharpton said.

Sharpton won only 24 delegates out of 2,162 needed for the Democratic nomination. Yet, he is a key player in Democratic politics and has been invited to speak at the Democratic National Convention.

"I think when you look at the fact that I have been asked

to do a commentary on CNBC, that I have been asked by Kerry to speak at the National Democratic Convention and that I'm starting to campaign with him, only those jealous critics thought I wouldn't be taken seriously," Sharpton said.

There has also been speculation that Sharpton may soon reach an agreement with CNBC for his own talk show.

"Clearly, they are interested," Sharpton said. "They have already signed me up to do a commentary. I am sure

they would not have done that if they were not interested in trying to create a more permanent relationship."

However, no contract has been signed. Sharpton, who has appeared on satirical television shows such as "Saturday Night Live," bristles at the suggestion that his commentary might not be taken seriously.

"Al Gore did. John McCain did. Rudy Giuliani did. Jesse Jackson did," he said, referring to those who

had hosted "Saturday Night Live." "How come all of a sudden when I did it, I was not going to be taken seriously?"

If anything, Sharpton said, he should be taken more seriously than other commentators.

He said, "My uniqueness in having been a former candidate who understands the political climate that (I) will be watching makes my commentary probably the most unique that will be on screen this year."

Wiley

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comparison to be apt. I lived it. I know very well what it was like to be good in an occupation where nearly all of the good guys were of the other so-called 'race,' and assumed by divine right deep down that this was the way it was. That made you not a colleague but a threat."

Wiley continued, "I always could tell when I was writing well, because I would come in and nobody would speak to me."

Throughout his career, Wiley never bit his tongue. He was unmerciful on whites as well as blacks that he thought had gone astray.

"Oddly, and we do mean oddly, Michael Jackson recorded what should be Michael Gerald Tyson's theme song," he wrote in one column for ESPN.com. "'Man in the Mirror.' As in, how can either one of them bear to look in one?"

Warning to his subject, Wiley wrote, "Like it or not, apparently, the world is a more interesting place with Michael Jackson and Mike Tyson in it. Jackson is much too scary to contemplate, even for a boxing writer accustomed to facial disfigurement of all kinds."

Wiley had a deep respect for the craft of writing and an even deeper respect for veteran writers such as Sam Lacy, the legendary sports writer for the Baltimore Afro.

Upon Lacy's death, Wiley wrote, "There's a vicious rumor going around that Sam Lacy, columnist for the Baltimore Afro-American weekly newspaper, is dead. They said he died last week, 99 years young, and missed Palmeiro hitting his 500th home run on Sunday. Mother's Day. Impossible. I know Sam Lacy. He can't die. He's one of the immortals."

Long before the Detroit Pistons began dominating the Los Angeles Lakers in the NBA finals, Wiley was solidly

for Detroit.

"If either the Minnesota Timberwolves or the Detroit Pistons were at their full strength rosters, and of sound mind as well as body, each of them, it can be argued, could win the NBA title; and one of them should win the NBA title this year...One of them should, and one of them just might - that one being the Pistons."

In another column, Wiley wrote: "The Finals is a referendum on who is the best coach in NBA history. For me (I can only speak for myself), it's Larry Brown."

After frequent appearances on sports shows, in recent years, Wiley increasingly turned his attention to writing books: "Serenity: A Boxing Memoir," "Why Black People Tend to Shout," "What Black People Should Do Now: Dispatches from Near the Vanguard," "Dark Witness: When Black People Should Be Sacrificed (Again)," and "Trial of the Century."

He also co-wrote several books, including "Best Seat in the House: A Basketball Memoir" (with Spike Lee), "By Any Means Necessary: The Trials and Tribulations of the Making of Malcolm X" (also with Spike Lee), "Born to Play: The Eric Davis Story" and Dexter Scott King's autobiography, "Growing Up King: An Intimate Memoir."

In a column on Kentucky's first black basketball coach, Wiley wrote: "...It couldn't have been simple for Tubby Smith to figure out how to play the game at Kentucky. There were going to be people who hated him no matter what his record was. There are people who hate him still."

"I still recall a columnist named Tom Callahan being moved to write in 1978 that Kentucky fans were happy to have won the national title under Joe B. Hall - the only drawback was the hand that had dropped 41 points that night, Jack Givens', happened to be black."

Ralph Wiley happened to be black. And he was proud of it.

Usher

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comments regarding the (Nu Beginning) group."

The 105-minute documentary traces Wheeler's earlier work with Darryl Wheeler's Happy Clowns, a group of pre-teen school kids that presented positive social messages to students through skits and songs in area recreation centers and schools, to his current work producing and promoting his entertainer son, Darryl "Li D" Wheeler Jr.

In addition to principals and school board members from Chattanooga and Florida, where Nu Beginning performed regularly, former Mayor Gene Roberts and WRCB-TV 3 personality David Carroll appear in the documentary to provide background commentary on the successes both groups had.

"We have a video of them that we took here (at the station), and we all had the same reaction back then that he (Usher) was the most amazing child performer we'd seen since Michael Jackson," Carroll said in a telephone interview. He also said that he has been surprised by Usher's lack of acknowledgment of his days with the local group.

"I just finished reading the new Rolling Stone and I've read most everything else about him over the years, and it's always puzzled me why Darryl doesn't seem to get any credit for nurturing his talents," Carroll said. "It's always the same story about him (Usher) singing in church, and then his mother moved him to Atlanta and he became a star."

The documentary contains footage of a young Usher approaching Wheeler about joining the group after a performance at Dalewood Middle School, located on a street renamed Usher Raymond Parkway in Brainerd. "He said he could sing," Wheeler said. At a tryout, Wheeler said the youngster's voice was OK, but his dancing skills were lacking.

"There was something about him, though, so I brought him in," Wheeler recalls. He said he rehearsed the boys constantly to perfect their stage show and to build camaraderie among the five. "We used to have to tie Usher's shoes to (another group member's) so he (Usher) could learn the steps, I'd tell them. 'If Usher messes up, you all have to do 50 push-ups.'"

Wheeler said he suspects that Usher's reluctance to mention him or the group may stem from the fact that the young singer and his mother signed a contract with Wheeler in 1991. Usher and other



members of Nu Beginning also signed a contract with 4-Site Records in Florida around the same time, Wheeler said.

Shortly after Nu Beginning recorded "Keep Dreaming" with 4-Site in March of 1992, Usher's mother took her son out of the group and moved him to Atlanta, according to Wheeler, with whom Usher was living at the time. Wheeler insists there were no problems at the time, but he had been aware that Patton was shopping her son to record labels in Atlanta, where she had been living with her husband at the time, Terry, since March of 1991.

Usher lived with the Wheelers through the end of the Dalewood Middle school year and the following summer, then spent weekends and tour dates in the fall with the Wheelers and school days in Atlanta. Usher signed with LaFace Records in February of 1993. Nu Beginning carried on for a short while without him, but "the magic, and the family, was gone," Wheeler said.

Usher's biography on his official Web site, Usherworld.com, notes that he was born in Chattanooga and discovered music as a 9-year-old after becoming a member of St. Elmo Missionary Baptist Church.

For years, Wheeler said, he has hoped to hear or read comments from Usher discussing the nearly three years and thousands of hours the rising star spent perfecting dance moves and learning new songs with Anthony Byrd, Charles Yarborough, Andrian Johnson and Reginald McKibbens. "We were brothers," says Byrd, 28, the oldest member of the group.

All four still live and work in Chattanooga, and say they are

happy about Usher's career success. They just want to be able to tell him so and to tell others about their history together, they said.

"His fame or his rise to success is what people think that hurts us, but I have so much love for him and he is so talented. I'm happy for him," Byrd said. "It's the fact that we can't get together and show that brotherly love to each other or to Darryl. What hurts the most is when I see him behind closed doors, he'll speak and say he misses me, and then he turns around and won't acknowledge us."

Byrd said his hardest moment with Usher came one night in 1998 when the entertainer came to town for a short performance at Bessie Smith Hall. Usher made eye contact with Byrd and Wheeler but didn't speak and then refused to roll down the window of the limousine outside after the show, Byrd said. "That was a real crushing moment for Darryl and me," Byrd said. "Here was the man that clothed him and fed him, and he wouldn't even roll the window down and shake his hand."

It was the chance to tell the group's story publicly that pushed Byrd, who still performs as a backup singer and dancer with Darryl Jr., to be a part of the documentary.

"A lot of people don't know the true story," he said. "As a young man growing up, it was hard to see a person that was part of your life doing well and you can't tell anybody because your friends mock you and make fun of you. That hurts."

People doubt the role Nu Beginning had on Usher's career because he won't mention it, Byrd said. Wheeler and Usher did speak regularly on the phone until about

four years ago. "He would call and basically tell me he loved me and how much he appreciated what I did for him, but he's not done it publicly, and that is the problem we all have," Wheeler said.

Wheeler said telling the story

for the documentary has brought some closure for him, but Byrd said it has made things worse in some ways.

"I feel more strongly now than before (the need) to get with that brother and ask him why. I want to hear it from his mouth."



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