

Bob Johnson

# What's happening!

Hello! Once again I'm in the corner transmitting happenings that have and will take place around our growing community. However, as a result of last weekend's activities, I'm sitting on the old Biltmore crate instead of standing. Plus I have captured two glasses of the plop, plop, fizz, fizz to help me make it through the balmy night.

It happened like this!

**Homecoming Festivities...**The little University on the Hill. Johnson C. Smith sponsored a big homecoming festival last weekend, hosting one of the largest gatherings of friends, alumni and students in the school's illustrious history. The Radisson Plaza Hotel, on the square, was used as homecoming headquarters.



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During the span of time between Friday and Sunday, this luxury hotel resembled a giant beehive with people constantly going and coming.

Hospitality suites were maintained by different alumni associations throughout the long weekend. These rooms were used as meeting points for renewing old acquaintances and feathering new ones.

**CIVIC CENTER FUN...**Across the street from the Radisson is the large Civic Center which housed the dances given last weekend.

Friday night from 9 p.m. till 1 a.m., Smith's second Annual Homecoming Ball took place. Brief Encounter from North Wilkesboro furnished the music for the guests.

Brief Encounter appeared again Saturday night to help the Alumni Association celebrate their annual Coronation Ball, which boasted the largest crowd ever for a Coronation Ball.

Included among the guests were Mr. and Mrs. Lonnie Gilliam from Asheville, Albert Welch from Chicago, Ill., Clay White from Washington, D.C., Mary Arnold from Chicago, Ill., Phyllis Waddell from Atlanta, Ga., Mr. and Mrs. Otto Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Maxwell, and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Reeves from Charlotte.

Even though, the Radisson and the Civic Center harbored many of the homecoming events, there were many other functions that happened all over the city. These happenings were traditional in effect, because of the enormous amount of food consumed, refreshments that titillated the palate and overall loose fun had by everyone involved. For example:

**AFTER GAME EXCITEMENT...**319 Flint Street is the home of Luther and Mamie Thompson. It is also the place where a number of people jubilantly gathered after Smith's first and timely victory last Saturday afternoon.

Mr. and Mrs. Vinson Thompson, Mr. and Mrs. Moses Clarkson, Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Jordan, Mr. and Mrs. Bobby Graham, Ernest Fleming, Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Johnson, Willie James Newsome, Owen McCullough, Vernell Howard, William Ernest Howard, and Thomesina Johnson all gathered to eat, greet and help complete a beautiful day.

1117 Mt. Kisco Dr. is the usually quiet domain of Sarah Foxx. However, the quiet was replaced with the fun-filled noise of her guests enjoying chitterlings, greens, pinto beans, corn bread, potato salad, candied yams, and all the trimmings.

Her guests included, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Grier, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Gillespie, Mr. and Mrs. Janois Young, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Marshall, Cheryl Grier, Laforest Williams and price Davis.

Pig feet and fried chicken were in order for the guests that enjoyed the hospitality at the home of Thomas and Janet Springs, 6329 Coach Hill Lane.

Along with the good food, and good drinks, there was a good time had by all. Included were: Mr. and Mrs. Leon Simmons, Mr. and Mrs. James Nuckles, Mr. and Mrs. Kenny Faulkner, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Faulkner, Mr. and Mrs. Erwin Springs, Mr. and Mrs. Jerry Springs, Lucille Springs, Debbie Springs, and Mr. and Mrs. Robert Craven.

Dwight and Cheryl Sullivan entertained friends in their gorgeous home at 5962 McNair Road.

Their guests, which included George and Arlene Simmons, Charles Mackey, Jesse and Cynthia Green, Sam Oglesby, Ann Sadler, Rebecca Moore, Trystal Moore, and Joe and Minnie Allison, enjoyed a special made salad which accompanied the chitterlings, rice, greens, pinto beans, slaw and other mouth watering dishes, washed down with sparkling beverage.

Across the way in the Hampshire Hills area of the city, other homecoming folks were gathered at the beautiful home of Archie and Helen Smith, to further wrap themselves in the warmth of an atmosphere created by close friends and a super occasion.

The menu consisted of turkey, ham, dressing, greens, green beans, rice and gravy, candied yams and much much more.

I come to enlighten  
In the dark  
To a place that is full  
Of space  
What color is life?  
Let me be your renaissance  
I am an art  
I come to paint sound  
Listen--  
Learn how to hear  
I speak to you

Through my dark chamber  
-by Eileen Hanson  
Special To The Post

Written from his prison cell several years ago, these words reveal the soul of T. J. Reddy, a prominent Charlotte poet and artist.

On October 17, Reddy returned to prison to serve out his 20-year sentence for his alleged part in the burning of the Lazy B stables in 1968. At the time of the trial in 1972, Judge Frank Sneed branded Reddy and his co-defendants, Dr. James Grant and Charles Parker, as "dangerous to society" unable to be rehabilitated because they were "over-educated revolutionaries" bent to violence and destruction.

The life and work of T. J. Reddy reveals a different person. Poet, painter, sculptor, father, and brother, Reddy had never been convicted of any crime before the famous Lazy B case.

Born in 1945 in Savannah, Georgia, the first of nine children, Reddy moved with his family to New York City as a teenager. In 1964, he entered Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte where he studied history and sociology and excelled in track and swimming. Later he transferred to UNCC where he met Jim Grant, a civil rights activist, involved in the Black Studies program there.

Reddy spent his summers working with children in the City Center, encouraging them to write poetry, to act, and enjoy the arts. It was while working as Project Director of the 10th Street Youth Center, a project of Char-



Charlotte poet and artist T. J. Reddy holds his daughter Niambi during a press conference before returning to prison last week. Lawyer James Ferguson (left) looks on.

lotte's Urban Ministry, that he met Charles Parker and a VISTA volunteer, Vicky Minar, whom he later married.

In 1967, Reddy along with Parker, Minar and other friends went to ride horses at the Lazy B stables, a public stable on the outskirts of Charlotte. Adhering to the Jim Crow tradition, the stable manager refused to allow the black students to ride. The next day Students for Action from UNCC returned to the stables, and in front of TV cameras and reporters, Parker was allowed to ride. Having successfully integrated the stables, the incident was considered over.

A year later in September 1968, one barn of the stables burned resulting in the death of 13 horses. An investigation at the time determined the fire was accidental and made no mention of arson.

Meanwhile Reddy was building a reputation as an artist and poet. He was poetry consultant and associate arts editor of the UNCC arts magazine and won the University's first creative arts award. Reddy's first play "The Meet" opened at UNCC in 1969 amidst enthusiastic acclaim from local critics. The play dealt with sensitive black-white relations at a time when racial tensions ran high in North Carolina.

While at UNCC, Reddy helped form the Black Students Union and the Black Studies Department. In 1969, he launched a literary magazine, AIM, for local poets. His work was highly respected and according to North Carolina's literary critic, Harriet Doar, "Reddy's words curve up and explode like rockets, gone sometimes before you can catch the bright pattern."

Reddy continued his concern for youth as a draft counselor in the black community where U.S. Army recruitment for the Vietnam war had intensified.

In 1972, in the wake of the Watergate scandal on the national scene, a local secret Grand Jury indictment named Reddy along with Grant and Parker in the burning of the Lazy B stables four years earlier. Their arrests came as a shock, not only to the three men and their families, but to the whole community. The trial of the Charlotte 3, as the case came to be called, sparked demonstrations in Charlotte and a national and international outcry.

When convicted and sentenced to a total of 55 years in prison, many human rights groups took up the case, including Amnesty International, the Commission on Racial

Justice of the United Church of Christ, and the North Carolina Political Prisoners Committee.

It was later revealed by the Charlotte Observer that the convictions and overly harsh sentences were based on the perjured testimony of two state witnesses, who received \$4,000 each from the U.S. Justice Department under the Nixon Administration.

For the last six years, the Charlotte 3 have been fighting the court system for a new trial. On October 2, the United States Supreme Court refused to hear their case, thus exhausting all legal means to overturn their conviction.

On the day of his return to prison to serve the remaining 17 1/2 years of his 20-year sentence, Reddy held his one-year old daughter, Niambi in his arms before news reporters and supporters. His determination masked his bitterness. "I will continue to work in prison, and I will survive as before," said Reddy.

In and out of prison on bond and appeals for the last six years, Reddy has continued his work as artist and community leader, always encouraging young blacks to express themselves and develop their talents. He also earned his B.A. and an M.A. in education while in prison.

As a member of the Afro-American Culture Center, he helped develop a strong arts program at the Center and coordinated the Afro-Festival's performing arts program last August.

Family Man According to Afro-American Center Director James Jeeter, who has worked with him for 10 years, "Reddy is serious, a family man, dedicated to the arts...not the kind that would go around burning barns."

Reddy the poet has received national attention with the publication of his book "Less than a Score, but a Point" (Random House 1974). A second

volume of poems will be published this year.

Taking themes from African legends and American jazz, Reddy's poetry expresses the feelings and experiences of growing up black in America. They are outstandingly precise, tender, bitter, but filled with hope, love, and a sense of a bright future.

Reddy has also achieved national fame as a painter. He has exhibited works in seven shows, including 4 one-man shows. A new series of paintings, "VENTURES", scenes from Africa, will open in Winston-Salem on November 3.

When poet-artist-activist, T. J. Reddy, returned to prison this month, the Performing Arts Guild Ensemble, held a demonstration outside Independence Plaza. P.A.G.E., which Reddy helped found, performs poetry throughout Charlotte. The group intends to carry on the work Reddy started, in spite of his imprisonment.

T. J. Reddy's work has not ceased, and will not cease as he has now returned to prison. Reddy is a man of vision, perseverance, discipline, and dedication to his mission as a promoter and creator of human expression. Perhaps this is most typified in the words of his poem to Judge Sneed also written in prison:

Judge said I'm something of a romantic And, yes, I confess I am

I love life, I love love I am romantic minded Knowing that in the midst of all the hatred and death My love of life is all I have left

-T. J. Reddy

Has your name been in the Charlotte Post lately? Keep us informed of what you are doing so that we can let your friends know by running it in Charlotte's fastest growing weekly.

I've not smelled the sweetness of honeysuckle...  
I've not felt fresh air  
Without high walls holding it...  
I've not seen fish swim in a silver lake  
I've not felt the rain bathe my face  
I've not seen a field of clover  
Nor walked along a treelined road

I've seen desolation in the streets  
From this cage  
I've seen cars pass  
With grimacing faces in them  
I've seen asphalt and buildings  
With windows showing curtains  
And more grimaces

I've not seen the sun but once in a month  
Nor felt its brightness on my brow  
And although it's been a while  
That I've not given thanks  
For my life  
I am thankful that I've not forgotten how.  
(from TWO SCENES-SUMMER THANKSGIVING POEM,  
by T. J. Reddy)

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