

BEHIND THE SCENES

With **LISA COLLINS**



GOLDBERG

Crossing The Line: Did Ted Danson go too far? That's what a lot of people are asking in the wake of the uproar over his recent New York Friars Club roasting of Whoopi Goldberg. Danson, who was toastmaster, did a near 20-minute monologue that from all accounts was closer to offensive than raunchy, complete with references to his and Whoopi's sex life. He stunned a star-studded crowd including Michael Douglas, Sugar Ray Leonard, Ed Begley Jr., Geraldo Rivera, Chris Rock, Halle Berry, Natalie Cole, Robert DeNiro, Larry King, Robert Guillaume, Malcolm Jamal Warner and Robin Williams with his entrance in blackface, use of the term "nigger" and a

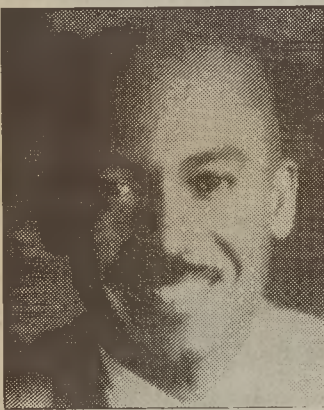
blacks walked out. Many of those who remained didn't quite know how to take it. "I've been to other Friars roasts," said Mayor Dinkins. "This one went over the line." Those leaving early included Halle Berry, actor Matthew Modine and the parents of CBS This Morning's Mark McEwen.

Standing By Her Man: Whoopi characterizes the media uproar over the flap as "insane." What's more, she freely admits it was her idea for him to appear in blackface and is amazed no one



COLE

thought the word "nigger" would come up. Danson, too, is thrown. A statement issued by the actor said his intent "was to amuse my dear friend Whoopi in what I thought was the privacy of the Friars Club." In an official statement, the Friars Club apologized and said they were "addened by the racially offensive nature of some of the material." But for all the flap, has no one yet stopped to examine that Danson's intent was hardly to offend black women? In fact, it was blatantly apparent that he had a great deal of love for at least one. So how does Whoopi feel? She called Danson her best friend in the world. "But," she told one reporter, "if you're asking are we going to run off and get married, the answer is no. I love him as a best friend. But as far as being in love, I don't want to be in love with anybody." (That's the voice of age, perhaps even wisdom).





WILLIAMS

slew of racially-offensive jokes exploiting sexual stereotypes. Talk show host Montel Williams walked out. Said Williams, "when Ted made the jokes about racially-mixed kids and everyone knows my wife is white and just gave birth to our child. I could see my wife start to cry." (Williams has since resigned from the Friars). "Perhaps Montel's show wasn't doing as well as it should be and this was his way to draw attention," said Whoopi of Williams, who went public with his outrage. But Montel wasn't the only one offended. Several other

Hoff labeled the 45-year-old singer "a danger" and has ordered him held in custody until his sentencing. James could serve up to nine years in the state prison. His girlfriend, Tanya Hijazi, pled guilty to assault with a deadly weapon and has already been sentenced to four years. The judge rejected a request that James be allowed to remain free long enough to marry Hijazi, the mother of his 18-month old son. James' own sentencing was postponed to Nov. 5. And that might be just where the real freak show begins. Turns out prosecutors have a videotape that shows James beating a woman bloody with a belt during group sex. While the tape can't be used to further charge James, prosecutors hope to show that he has a real propensity for violence and sadomasochism.

By the Way: Best wishes to singer Meli'sa Morgan on her recent marriage to theater producer Shelly Garrett....And for all the bad news hitting Michael Jackson, the good news is that his Scopus Awards Dinner (set for January 29) is getting unprecedented support.**Next week: Kim Fields comes out on top again.**

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