

# LIFESTYLES

## Blacks make mark in mystery

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ST. PAUL — Thirty years ago, Paula L. Woods would sneak Chester Himes' mysteries out of her father's bookshelf.

"When my parents left the house, I'd read those books with racy covers," Woods told at the first-ever Black Mystery Writers Symposium.

So, when Woods read a newspaper article many years later describing Walter Mosley as "the first successful African-American crime writer," she knew it wasn't true.

Woods said she was so bothered by inaccuracies about the history of black mystery writing that she wrote "Spooks, Spies and Private Eyes: Black Mystery, Crime and Suspense Fiction of the 20th Century."

"The phenomenal contribution of black mystery writers is that they bring the culture into the novel at the very beginning," Woods told the symposium Thursday.

"Genre fiction gets dissed as not being serious literature. My own investigation shows that black mystery fiction gives us a window on our politics, identity, mores."

Among writers to whom the symposium paid homage were Rudolph Fisher (1897-1934) and Himes (1909-1984). Himes spent seven years in prison and wrote 13 books.

John McCluskey, chairman of Afro-American Studies at Indiana University, talked about Fisher and Himes as forefathers of black mystery fiction. Both men, he said, wrote out of a common African-American tradition that combines folk tales, poetry and humor.

McCluskey remembered buying Himes' paperbacks for 95 cents at the bus depot in Columbus, Ohio, when he was young. "I liked this Himes guy. His stories were short, never a dull moment. I liked the toughness and range of what he was trying to do."

Woods said blacks write more private-eye novels than police "procedurals," mysteries that focus on methods used by police and detectives.

"This is an interesting reflection of the African-American's relationship to the criminal-justice system. We write as an outsider," she said.

The symposium was part of the four-day Bouchercon World Mystery Convention, which concludes Sunday.

## Hat more than crowning glory

By Jeri Young  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Hats have become African American women's crowning glory.

"You must be trying to get God's eye in that hat," is one of the most often heard phrase for the thousands of millinery-sporting African American women.

Although today's more relaxed styles has women choosing elegantly casual attire for church, traditionalists still reach into round hat boxes for accessories they know will make an outfit perfect.

"When I was a child, it was unheard of to go to church without a hat," says Lori Scott, merchandising manager for E Style, a catalog created specifically for African American women by Johnson Publishing and Spiegel.

African America's love affair with colorful hats as accessories can be documented to the days of slavery.

The simple straw hats that protected women from the sun were magically transformed into Sunday go-to-meeting finery by placing a single flower in the brim.

Head rags became turbans when fancy knots replaced simple ones.

"African American women have unique hat looks," says Sandra Ford. "Rhinestones, feathers, you name it. It makes our hats unique."

Ford, senior buyer for Essence By Mail and professed hat aficionado, cites three popular styles in ladies' hats: the watteau, roller, both large hats with upturned brims and the gardener, a coolie or garden style hat. Each style is large, brimmed and of course, easily embellished.



PHOTO /CHARLES CLARKSON



PHOTO /SUE JOHNSON



primarily more embellished to be more prominent for African Americans."

Hats are for wearing to church and social functions primarily, she adds. And there is no such thing as an ugly hat.

"Oh, I wouldn't call any hat ugly," Ford says. "Some might be somewhat garish to someone who is more conservative. Some people don't like the pads and rhinestone and all those things."

The important thing, according to Ford, is to wear a hat.

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## Jumpers hit it big for fall

By Francine Parnes  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Geoffrey Beene is eternally optimistic about jumpsuits as a wardrobe necessity. Through more than 30 years of designing them, he has believed that they would someday supplant classics such as the little black dress and evening wear.

"I've always said the jumpsuit will be the ball gown of the next century," Beene says, "and I still think so."

Isaac Mizrahi also champions the sleek, modern silhouette which he calls "a dress with legs." But for most designers, the jumpsuit comes and goes.

This season it's flying high. Bloomingdale's catalog calls it the "statement for fall." And Mizrahi says it's "just the sexiest thing in the world to wear. You put one on, brush your hair and you're out the door. It's an incredibly futuristic thing."

Futuristic, indeed. Jumpsuits, quick dressing for paratroopers during World War II, took off again in 1971 when the movie "A Clockwork Orange" marked them as space-age attire.

Now for fall, men as well as women are caught up in the fashion mostly for weekend and evening — as designers adopt looks from the industrial and high-tech worlds.

Jack Herschlag in New York, executive director of the National Association of Men's Sportswear Buyers Inc., offers this assessment for menswear:

"Tommy Hilfiger is doing a lot of metallics and reflective fabrics, Donna Karan is working off of an industrial look, and Robert Freda takes a basic style that could be an old aviator's jumpsuit and makes it forward fashion with an industrial jacket over it."

Beene likes them for women because any single piece of clothing "saves time and effort and thought." And he likes the comfort factor.

"I recently went to a benefit, and Fred Hayman's wife had one on," Beene said. "I noticed she danced with greater ease than anyone else on the floor."

Then he added: "If you look at dancers when they're rehearsing, they don't wear skirts, they wear leotards. They're so great for movement and comfort."

Beene works with wool, alpaca and silk, fashioned into stretch jersey which, he says, permits greater movement. A black or navy wool jersey jumpsuit with no waist, straight legs and long kimono sleeves is \$1,750.

A Mizrahi favorite this season is a strapless white wool and silk jumpsuit with corset bodice and straight leg, about \$1,155 suggested retail.

New York designer Gemma Kahng says the jumpsuit is important for evening "because everyone seems to be dressing a little less formally. If you wear an evening jumpsuit, you look more modern than in a long gown. And you can still be accepted as formally dressed."

"Because it's so simple, you could wear it on the slopes under a ski parka," Golden says. "Or dress it up with a black square-toed boot and a scarf at the neck and wear it downtown for drinks and dinner. It's real easy."

## Halloween comes in with a big bang

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SPRINGVILLE, Iowa — Much as it should be in autumn at popular Armstrong's Pumpkin Patch just south of town. Pumpkins, squash and gourds. Hayrack rides. A petting zoo. The attractive new metal building, no doubt, is sheltering machinery at the ready to bring in the harvest.

But appearances can deceive.

Dare to enter and you descend into a labyrinth of dark passages. Walls rattle, bodies drop, near-lifelike mannequins of The Predator, The Alien, Pumpkinhead, "Independence Day" aliens and 30 other chilling creatures loom around every corner. Smoke thickens. Strobes flash. Mannequins come to life.

What is and isn't clear. Just this seems sure: Halloween isn't one night of trick-or-treating anymore.

The Cedar Rapids-area's deacon of Halloween fun-making Chris Smaby has moved his well-visited Halloween Yard from his northeast Cedar Rapids house to the new farm building at the Armstrong pumpkin farm.

Welcome to Nightmare Manor.

The plan is during a five-week run each autumn to set the farm equipment outside and move the haunted house in.

Smaby, who has invested \$30,000 over the years in a troupe of creatures like no other around, says he's moved to the country to better let Iowans revel in the season.

He estimates 7,000 people

toured his yard and house last year. All the investment and all the work for just four hours on Halloween night stopped making sense, he says.

But he thinks he has learned this lesson: Iowans have an appetite for Halloween that can stretch to five weeks and that will lead them to pay \$5 a person for a chance Smaby can scare them.

"People buy fright," he says.

Americans, Smaby maintains, spend more on Halloween for treats, costumes, parties, decorations than on any other holiday but Christmas. It's appropriate, he adds, that the Halloween season should stretch over weeks.

"I'm on a little crusade here to give Halloween its due."

Smaby, a karate teacher and self-defense instructor at the

Linn County Sheriff's Department, is something of a historian of horror and Halloween. His wife, Diane, is as well.

He says the first haunted house in the United States was opened in 1965. In the years since, parents in some communities have grown less eager to send their children house to house trick-or-treating, and have organized Halloween parties in schools and churches that can promise safety.

Smaby and pumpkin farm owners Gene and Chris Armstrong see the haunted house as another step in expanding the ways to make Halloween a fun, family time.

The Armstrongs estimate that 40,000 to 50,000 people visited their pumpkin farm last year.

