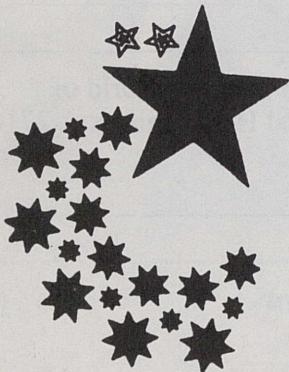


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Black Literary Magazine

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Summer, 1988
Doing Ourselves Justice
Exploring the roots of our culture

STOKING, STROKING AND FINELY SMOKING

(for Mississippi jazzmakers)

*When they solo like stars, when
they square the circle, when
they jam too-tough and coldclock the moon, when
they solidify sound like revetment against a river's rage, when
they break the prime meridian of green wood, party off
in deep time to lock the ear to ancient rhythms of earth,
then body and soul the Mississippi jazzmakers be
stoking, stroking, and finely smoking
like Parchman rockbreakers, emotion-world shakers,
causing wild women to worry, causing wild women to be the blues,
causing men of stone to melt under the possession
of sound so sweet saints unremember the cost of sin,
go for straight no chaser gin, causing folk to feel
they cut and chop so fine, so fine.*

*Deepending as the music flows like the flood of '27, like
the juneteenth of jubilee, like the desperate moves
of plantations and tenant farms and urban sharecropping
over Mississippi mud, like a rescue from absence by crystal
black persuasion, obsidian love in the horns finding all the notes
of desire, all the notes.*

*Drum, piano, and bass strut lightly to a summit, to the no shadows
of anointed anger, to complex downhome vibrations wailing
as the last voice trailing on the grim rim of inner space:
here they preach and testify, each in kind stoking, stroking,
and finely smoking / stoking, stroking, and finely smoking
reflections and life in the learning mirrors of the mind.*

*They are stays against madness, these makers of jazz,
their eternal gigs bright as suns in the bongo-boss bass
lines, in the sermons of the sundown eyes, the scores improvised
strong as the love of a love supreme, making clouds of joy and vision
for the five blind boys, securing safe passage for the always one
more river to cross, and nothing's lost, and our journey's never
given over as we are moved by their stoking, stroking, and
finely smoking the stoking, the stroking, and the finely
smoking movements
as they climb the mountainside of time.*

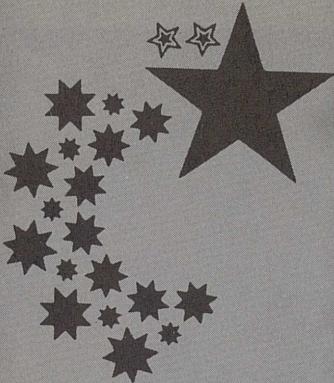


Photo by Eric Jones



Jerry W. Ward, Jr., Professor of English at Tougaloo College, is a poet and critic whose articles and poems have appeared in many professional and literary journals. This is his second publication with *Shooting Star Review*. Ward received his Ph.D. from the University of Virginia and is the United Negro College Fund Scholar-in-Residence at Talladega College.

His work in progress includes *A Gathering of Roots: Five Black South Writers* and a new collection of poems.



Publisher's Statement

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Production of *Shooting Star Review* is supported by grants from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, The Pittsburgh Foundation, Westinghouse Foundation, Heinz Corporation and the generous financial and volunteer support of many individuals who believe in this mission.

I ride buses a lot, and a bus working Pittsburgh's Eastern Corridor—where most Black folks be—hauls more people on one round trip than a bus in other sectors carries in a week. And, people talk. Sometimes in whispers, sometimes loud. Sometimes to and sometimes about each other.

"Naw, man. This is it!" One old guy slapped his thigh to keep time, and launched into a gritty "Sitting on the Dock of the Bay."

"No, no." His friend argued. "You keep that stuff. I want nice music." He crooned "The Twelfth of Never" while waving his arms elegantly.

They didn't take turns soloing. They didn't harmonize on one song and then the other. They outsang each other, simultaneously.

Back in January, a dressed-to-the-max young lady perched next to an unadorned friend. The chic gal said, "Now, honey, I was in Kaufmann's basement the other day and, you know how they mark things down to 50% off? Well they got them red tags up, so, you know, if it started out at \$10 and they marked it down to \$5, now it ain't but \$2.50. And they got gloves and hats... matched sets. Go get you some. You know

where I mean? I'm going back down there myself cause I seen me a coat..."

I rode a different bus not long ago. Everything about that tidy environment with silent faces glancing over crisply folded *Post-Gazettes* and *Wall Street Journals* reminded me of how much I missed climbing over the Greyhound-bound luggage, baby strollers and brown-paper shopping bags filled with Virginia Spots, Louisiana Ring Cakes and Tide.

So, this "Doing Ourselves Justice" issue embraces our cotton-picking, last-hired/first-fired, processed head, vibrant, noble, bus-riding ethnicity because... because...

because...

...some of us still miss the point that ethnic heritage is like family—good, bad or indifferent—it's ours. When we truly understand the elements that shaped our present and groom our future, and when we realize that "culture" is just a collection of ethnic idiosyncrasies [e.g., our language, spirituality, endurance, creativity and style], our African-American family can grow in positive, constructive directions and become healthier, wealthier and wiser.

Sandra Gould Ford

Shooting Star Productions, Inc. is a non-profit corporation that exists to promote artistic and educational outlets for expression of the African-American experience through production and distribution of publications, video and other media and through other forms of literary and artistic expression.

JESSE B. WALKS AGAIN

or: MY FEET TO THE DISCO BEAT

or: FILE GUMBO OF SOLE

or: FEET, DO SOMEONE ELSE'S STUFF

or: COMIC CRUISE IN MY CANOES

or: DISCO TO SHOW YA



Photo by Outlaw

My feet done carried me a who-o-ole lotta places . . . a *whole lotta* places . . . My feet done stood in front of a who-o-ole lotta faces . . . Done taken me through years of disco high school, disco college, and disco jobs . . . My feet done stood stoically, heroically, in the disco unemployment line . . . My feet done trodded and plodded . . . treaded and sweated . . . been horny and corny . . . Them dogs done barked and walked and talked on many a disco Friday or disco Saturday night . . .

Them feet done carried me to the disco clothing store that the disco deejay mentioned on the disco commercial on "his" disco show at the disco station in Discoland . . . My feet done bugged me . . . done drugged me . . . LAWDY-LAWD how them big *twelves* done hugged me, walking wicked to the disco barbershop to get a disco haircut . . . once upon a time . . . maybe twice.

I recall stepping *solidly* in my new disco walk . . . in my disco socks and my disco shoes on my way home to take a disco shave and disco bath in some disco bubblebath in tune to the latest disco record . . . I put on my disco drawers . . . my disco suit . . . and my DISCO DISCO DISCO shoes . . . and some *extra* disco deodorant and disco mouthwash . . . a goo-gob of disco toothpaste . . . and discoed on out the door to the disco . . . I discoed all night 'til the sun shine bright . . . heard the disco sound of a disco group . . . drank some disco wine . . . got a disco toot . . . then dreamed sweet memories in my sleep to the DISCO BEAT . . .

ARTURO (formerly "Arthur Pfister")
is a poet living in America.

—ARTURO!
(early in the moanin')



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ISSN 0892-1407

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C O N T E N T S

ESSAYS

The Gift of Music by Ira Ross	6
Blacks and Stroke by Aisha Rice	23

FEATURED ARTIST/ILLUSTRATION

Faith Ringgold	18
Street Story and Quilt	20

FICTION

Juneteenth by Helen Malkerson	9
Street Story by Faith Ringgold	19
The Fall of Adam by Charles Chesnutt	24
It's A Joke by Glen M. Rinehart	28

POETRY

Stoking, Stroking & Finely Smoking	2
Jesse B. Walks Again	4
Freedom in My Twenties	12
St. Paul's	13
My People on the Run	16
Soup	31
Minstrel Man	35
Before I Die	36
Power of the Planet	38

QUIZ

Talk, Talk, Talk!!	39
--------------------------	----

REVIEWS

Cooking Up A Story	30
Joe Turner's Come & Gone	32
Shuckin & Jivin	34
Uncle Remus	36
Liza Lou & the Yeller Belly Swamp	37

COVER ART BY WAITMOND VIRE, JR.

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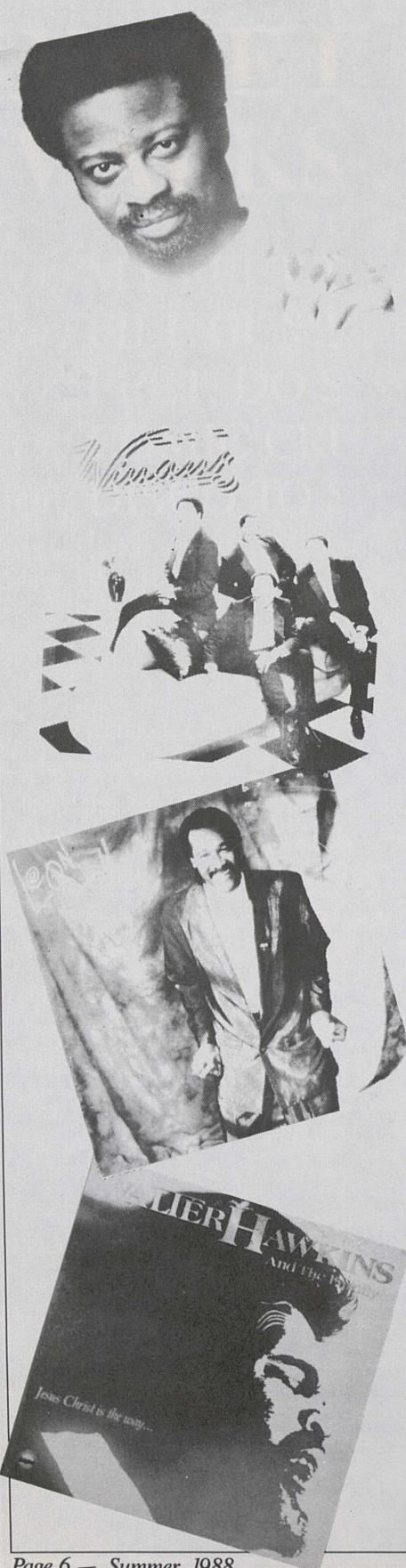
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THE GIFT OF MUSIC

By Ira Ross



I can recall coming home from elementary school and listening to my mother's recordings of the Platters, Drifters, Jackie Wilson, Ella Fitzgerald, and Johnny Mathis. No matter how my school day went, I felt good after hearing those songs. I can also recall how dramatically my mood was affected when watching a television mystery and hearing the background music build to a suspenseful pitch; or being brought to tears listening to the choir sing in the movie "Green Pastures" and Mahalia Jackson sing during the funeral in "Imitation of Life."

Gospel music and spirituals impressed me most. My grandmother was a church organist and choral director and my grandfather, father, mother, aunts, uncles, brothers and sister either played instruments or sang. Piano lessons at an early age was a requirement for all the children. A day at my house included chores, school, meals, and gathering around the piano for a musical session. When I was too young to interpret the Scriptures and understand the sermons, the hymns, solos, and anthems conveyed the message that God and Jesus were real. These early experiences encouraged my interest in the emotional power of music.

Beyond the training I received in elementary and high school, I was able to further my musical knowledge through studies at the University of Pittsburgh School of Music. It was through these advanced studies that I developed an intellectual appreciation

for the affective properties of music to move and manipulate the emotions.

Through critical analysis of symphonies, operas, sonatas, cantatas, and other forms of musical expression, I learned to identify those elements in music that impact upon the emotional state. I discovered that there are tonal, harmonic, and rhythmic devices that can, when performed in certain sequences and combinations, move one to tears, create tension, and even arouse romantic longing. (I swear my wife enhanced my affection for her by playing Dionne Warwick albums when we were courting.)

At some point we are all affected by these amazing devices. Store owners play soundtracks that stimulate spending. Music's dramatic devices produce nostalgic "snapshots" . . . When I hear Marvin Gaye's "I Heard it Through the Grapevine," I am instantly transported back to the images, sounds, and feelings that were significant in my life in 1968. Television advertisers now exploit this property of music by playing songs from the '50s and '60s to attract "Baby Boomers."

In college, I studied musical theory including ancient Greece and Rome, the Middle Ages, the Age of Enlightenment, Baroque, Classic, Romantic, and Modern periods. I looked at the influence of music on the Catholic, Protestant, and Lutheran Churches. I examined the contribution to music made by the acknowledged masters such as Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, Haydn,



Liszt, Chopin, etc. All the music I studied had Anglo-Saxon origins. The theoretical principles of Gospel music, Blues, and Negro Spirituals; all of the African-American music forms were omitted.

Ironically, while attending the university of Pittsburgh I met James Johnson. James had come to the University from Grambling, Louisiana to work on a Masters degree and Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology. (Ethnomusicology studies the ethnic origins of music.) James—a gifted jazz and gospel pianist, composer, arranger, and music historian—wanted to help shed light on African-American contributions to Western music.

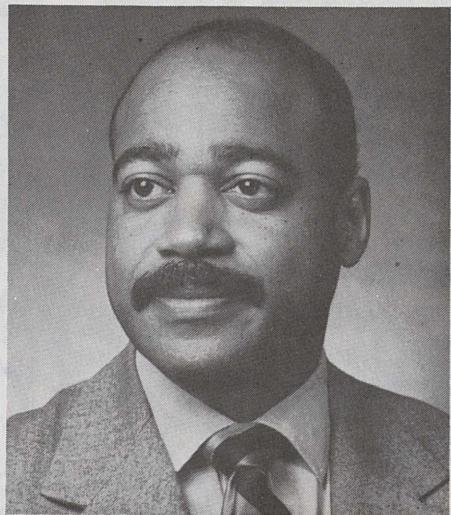
Being accurately aware of the exclusion of African-American music from Pitt's curriculum, James founded the Afro-American Music Training Program. He and his wife Pam, a brilliant singer, trained students in the theory, philosophy, performance, and history of Afro-American music. Through the Johnsons' school I finally found the opportunity to study the structure, theory, history, and emotional content of gospel and spiritual music. (It was a good thing I had a passion for this music, because it turned out to be the most complex and difficult music I ever studied.)

Some of the most powerful music in any culture is produced through the suffering. The slavery songforms were the most spontaneous and sincere form of expression available to slaves. The songs soothed pain, fears and sorrows. It also served as a means of communication and sometimes had coded messages. For example, when slaves sang Spirituals like "Steal Away" or "This Train," they were often sending signals to other slaves that an escape attempt was imminent.

Even today, gospel and spiritual music composed or performed by Lionel Ritchie, Andre Crouch, Walter Hawkins, Leon Patillo, Maurice White, Richard Smallwood, Larnelle Harris, and groups like The Winans are some of the greatest musicians of our times. Their creations represent emotional and spiritual responses to the oppressive conditions under which Black Americans currently live.

From an academic perspective, I have developed the tools necessary to critically analyze the tonal, harmonic, and rhythmic structure of gospel music and Negro Spirituals: I learned to appreciate why they function to edify man and glorify God. I have found no theoretical formula, however, that completely explains why I feel the way I do when I hear it. I can only surmise that feelings of pain, suffering, oppression, sorrow, and love of God are intrinsically interwoven into the fabric of the music—I will simply accept it as a gift. I am grateful for the genius of Black composers and arrangers like Nathaniel Dett, William Dawson, Hal Johnson, H.T. Burleigh, Jester Hairston, the late Wendell Whalum (Morehouse College), and Roland Carter (Hampton Institute) to capture the Black experience in their music.

From a spiritual perspective, I am fortunate to have been moved closer to God through their music.



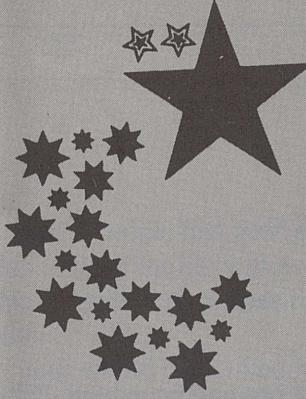
Ira Ross is part-owner of the Ross Book and Music Store in Pittsburgh and is completing his Ph.D. in the School of Library and Information Science at the University of Pittsburgh.

Gospel music is known by its informal structure and improvised expression.

Negro Spirituals, in contrast, are formally structured with little or no improvisation. Spirituals are usually written in four-part harmony and are characteristic of the music performed by the Hampton University and Tuskegee University choirs.







JUNETEENTH

By Helen V. Malkerson

Can I lick the spoon, Ma?" Josh begged as his mother scraped the last of the batter into cake pans.

"Ain't you got nothin' better to do than get in folks' way when they so busy?" Mamma handed him the spoon and empty bowl. "You know I got to hurry up an' get this cake done for the picnic. Did you bring in the rest of the eggs?"

"Yes, Ma'am," Josh said. "They right here in the basket." He sniffed at the golden brown sweet potato pies cooling on the window sill.

"Get on away from there," Mamma scolded. "Where's Marcy?"

Josh looked out the screen door. "She out there playin' with Susie Lou. They all right."

"Well, you keep yore eye on her an' the baby 'til I get done, hear? Uncle B.G. be along pretty soon. He gonna give us a ride to the celebration in his Model T."

Josh grinned. Uncle B.G. was Mamma's brother. After Daddy got killed in the accident Uncle B.G. had said, "You got to be the man of the house now." Josh had tried but sometimes he felt like more of a hindrance than a help.

He told himself that soon as ever he was big enough he'd get a job and make some money so Mamma wouldn't have to work so hard. Uncle B.G. helped out when he could, but he had his own family to take care of—Aunt Lucy and Leroy and Willie Mae, his cousins. Nobody had a whole lot to get along on. He'd overheard the grown-ups talking among themselves. "Hard times," they said. "Hard times." Mamma washed and ironed and cleaned for white folks in town, but like she said, they had to scratch gravel sometimes.

Josh reached into his overall pocket, reassuring himself

that the little packet of firecrackers that Uncle B.G. had given him was safe.

He had asked if he should save the firecrackers for the Fourth of July but Uncle B.G. said, "Uh-uh. This a more impo'tant celebration for us folks here in Texas. We celebratin' our Independence Day, the day we found out we wasn't slaves no more. An' *that* news come to us late, more than two years after ever' body else knewed. White folks took advan'age of us, like they always done, makin' us work 'til all the crops was in. But when the soldiers come, an' word of Pres'dent Lincoln's Proclamation got aroun', they had to own up to it. We was free!"

Uncle B.G. laughed. "Course, Texas bein' such a big state an' all, an' a lot of people way out in the country, not ever'body heard of it at the same time. But when the news come, they so happy they bound to celebrate. They wasn't no official day 'til later on when they kind of settled on June 19th—only they just natur'ly got to callin' it Juneteenth—an' tha's how we come to be celebratin' our very own holiday."

It was nearly noon when Josh heard Uncle B.G. coming down the road in the Model T, honking at a couple of chickens which ran squawking across the road.

"You-all ready?" he said to Josh as Marcy ran into the house yelling, "Ma, Ma, Uncle B.G.'s here!"

"Josh," Mamma called, "you come on now and help. Marcy, you watch the baby."

The layer cake, now lusciously frosted, and sweet potato pies were nestled into a cardboard suit box for transportation with Aunt Lucy's big covered pan of fried chicken.

Continued on page 10



*We celebratin' our Independence Day,
the day we found out we wasn't slaves no more."*

"How you-all?" Mamma greeted her brother and his family.

"Jes' fine," Aunt Lucy said, fanning herself with a round cardboard fan from the funeral parlor. "Hot, ain't it?"

"We got watermelon," Leroy announced importantly.

"Tha's right," Uncle B.G. said. "Looks like we ain't hardly got room for all of us an' all this good stuff you ladies done prepared. You gonna have to set an' hold it on your laps."

"Josh, why don't you an' Leroy put the melon an' the fried chicken into the baby's buggy and wheel it on down to the picnic grounds?" Mamma said. "You can set the melon in the river to cool when you get there."

"Do we have to?" the boys asked, knowing better than to argue.

Marcy and Willie Mae, wiggling in the back seat, giggled.

"Tha's enough now," Aunt Lucy said. "Leroy, you go on an' go with Josh."

"Tell you what," Uncle B.G. said. "Comin' home, you boys can ride on the runnin' board."

So it was settled. The Model T rumbled off in a cloud of dust. Pushing the wicker baby buggy down to the picnic grounds, Leroy said, "I guess we got to listen to them old speeches."

"Yeah," Josh answered, "An' the preacher, he gonna pray a little an' tell us how we got to be thankful. But that don't matter. We gonna have us a good time."

When the boys got to the picnic grounds, the ladies were setting food out on the wooden tables, which they'd covered with old tablecloths, weighting down the corners with jars of home-made pickles and preserves.

Uncle B.G. had gone off to pitch horseshoes with some of the men and Marcy and Willie Mae were playing happily with their dolls under a pin-oak tree.

Leroy and Josh trundled the buggy down to the water's edge, where they unloaded the melon and set it in a shallow, tree-shaded spot to cool. Josh brought the buggy back to where his mother sat talking to Aunt Lucy, who was making a great fuss over little Susie Lou.

"I'm goin' over to watch 'em play horseshoes, you comin'?"

"Naw, not right now, it's too hot." Josh nodded toward a

pair of washtubs filled with soda pop and near-beer. "I'm goin' to go get me a piece of ice from over there."

"You better not." If Deacon Brown catches you, you be sorry."

Deacon Brown was a tall, well-built man who stood talking to a couple of men who had come up to the make-shift pop stand. Beside his chair, a rickety card table held a wooden cigar box and a couple of bottle openers.

"He ain't gonna catch me," Josh said. "I'll jes' grab me a little bitty ol' piece an' run, 'fore he turns aroun'." Josh wasn't exactly afraid of Deacon Brown, but he knew as well as Leroy did that if everybody got to helping themselves there wouldn't be much ice left.

Josh had noticed the way Deacon Brown's stern face softened when he looked at Josh's Mamma. And Mrs. Johnson had said, "Deacon Brown be a fine man."

Josh wiped his sweaty hands on his overalls. The dirt was warm under his bare feet. He headed for the washtubs. On a day like this, a bottle of pop was a luxury Josh wished he could afford.

Surreptitiously, he reached for one of the slippery chunks of ice but jumped as a deep voice growled, "What you doin' there? You stay out of there unless you want to buy some pop. You got any money?"

Josh looked wildly around, ready to run.

"You Josh Johnson, ain't you, Boy?"

"Yes, Sir, Deacon Brown."

"How would you like to earn a little spendin' money?" Deacon brown's face softened a little. "You he'p me unload this here case of near-beer into the tubs an' put in some more pop so's it'll be chillin' an' I'll give you a quarter an' a bottle of pop. You can pick any flavor you want."

A quarter! "Sho', Deacon Brown," Josh grinned. "Yes, Sir!"

The wooden crates, with slats to keep the bottles separated, were heavy. Josh had to set some of the top ones off so as to get at all the flavors. When the empty bottles were returned, they'd go back to the dealer for credit. The thick glass was opaque, scratched and scarred where the bottles, used over and over again, had jostled against one another. Josh worked steadily, carrying bottles from the cases to the wash tubs. Sticking his hands into the cold water felt good.



Some people had gone on down to the river bank to sit in the shade of the big willow tree which leaned into the water, swishing its leafy fronds like a lady washing her hair at the kitchen sink.

Josh would have liked to be there, splashing in the cool water, but he thought of the two bits he was going to get, and pretty soon Deacon Brown, who'd been busy opening bottles and making change from the cigar box, said to him, "You gettin' thirsty? You can open a bottle of pop now, if you want."

That was the invitation Josh had been waiting for, but he hesitated, still unable to make up his mind between strawberry and cream soda, until Deacon Brown said, "C'mon, now. Can't take all day to pick out a little ol' bottle of pop!" So Josh opened up a cream soda and tipped the bottle to his lips, savoring the smooth sweetness as it flowed, cool and refreshing, into his parched throat.

About that time, his sister Marcy came sidling up with a fruit jar full of lemonade. "Mamma says can I ask Mr. Brown if he'll let me put this lemonade in the tub to cool?"

Josh glared at her. "He ain't goin' to let you put that jar of lemonade in his tub. Like to run me off for jes' tryin' to swipe a little bitty piece of ice, 'fore he ask me to work for him."

Marcy stuck out her tongue.

"What you want, Missy?" Deacon Brown asked, not sounding cross at all.

"Mamma says can we put this jar of lemonade in your tub to cool?" Marcy rolled her eyes a little like she was flirting.

"Now why didn't yore Mamma ask me?" Deacon Brown said. "She scared of me?"

"No, sir," Marcy answered. "She jes' busy, tha's all. She say you can come and have some of her fried chicken and sweet potato pie later on, if you want."

"MMmmmm! Tha's about the best offer I had all day," Deacon Brown laughed. "That fruit jar cover screwed on tight?"

"Yes, sir," Marcy batted her eyes at Josh.

"Aw right, then. But don't you go tellin' ever'body, or they all be wantin' to do the same thing, an' I won't be sellin' no more col' drinks. An' we tryin' to raise a little money for the church."

Marcy set the fruit jar down in the tub and skittered off.

Josh helped Deacon Brown dump out some of the ice water, and pretty soon a raggedy old truck drove up with a twenty-five pound block of ice in the back.

"Yeah, we about to need that," Deacon Brown said.

"Got to get it broke up a little an' pack it into the tubs."

All at once, an awful lot of yelling and commotion rose from the river. Just as Josh got there, he saw Marcy standing on the bank, howling, and the baby buggy was upside down in the water.

Josh's insides got all trembly. When Susie Lou was born, folks had said she was a little too pale, but when she got her color, she was a real pretty baby, sweet as sugar, and if anything had happened to her . . . Josh jumped in, and got hold of the buggy, but there wasn't any sign . . . he thought he heard his mother calling.

Looking up, he saw her standing not far away, the baby in her arms. Most everybody seemed to have gone back to the picnic tables. Josh scrambled out of the shallow river, dragging the buggy with him. Susie Lou was all right, that was the main thing, but . . . Josh smiled at the baby, bouncing in his mother's arms, and then turned around to scowl at Marcy.

"I was jes' playin,'" Marcy whimpered. "I never meant for it to go in the water. An' now," she began to howl louder, "my dolly's gone an' drownd!"

"No she ain't," Josh said. "She jes' wet, like me. She never even fell out, cause you had her tied in with that ol' piece of blanket."

"Well, hot as it is today, you both gonna dry out real quick," Mamma said. "As for you, young lady, you better never take that buggy out of my sight again. You know you ain't s'pose to borrow it to wheel yore doll in—specially without askin'!"

"I'm sorry, Mamma," Marcy sniffled.

"You better be," Mamma answered. We gonna have ourselves a time gettin' all that mud and dirt off'n it—if it ever can be got clean. You ain't gonna have no more time to get into mischief, 'til you get that job done. No, Ma'am!"

Josh pulled the sodden packet of firecrackers from his pocket. "Ain't no good now," he sighed. "But I sure am gettin' hungry!"

"Well, le's us all go get somethin' to eat," Mamma said. B.G. an' Lucy be wonderin' what become of us!"

"Come on, Marcy," she said to the contrite little girl. "I expect you jes' as hungry as anybody. Josh, you go on an' tell Deacon Brown we about to set down to the table."

Deacon Brown! It came to Josh all of a sudden—he'd run right off in the midst of what he was doing. What would Deacon Brown have to say about that?

When Deacon Brown looked down at his bedraggled helper, he drawled, "You s'pose to take off yore clo'es

Continued on page 12



Juneteenth, continued from page 11

before you go swimmin', Boy." Then Deacon Brown reached into the cigar box where he kept his change. He took out a quarter and looked at it thoughtfully, weighing it in his hand. He reached into the box again and pulled out another coin, a dime. "You such a good worker," he laughed. "I'm gonna give you a raise."

Thirty-five cents! That was more money than Josh ever had at one time before in all his life! He made up his mind; he'd give the whole quarter to Mamma—he'd still have the extra ten cents...

"You rich now, boy," Deacon Brown laughed. He reached into the tub and pulled out the jar of lemonade. "Go on now. Tell yore Mamma I be over in a few minutes for some of that good fried chicken and sweet potato pie."

Josh ran back over to where the family was sitting. "Ma," he said, "I got somethin' for you." Opening his hand, he showed her the quarter damp with sweat. "I earned it," he said proudly, "Helpin' Deacon Brown."

Mamma nudged Uncle B.G. Pulling Josh to her, she gave him a quick hug. "You the man of the family now, all right," she said.



EAT RIGHT LITERALLY

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Freedom In My Twenties

*I had heard about
what Mr. Turner
and Mr. Douglass
and Mr. King
had done (for me), but
Mr. Media
said "I" was "this"
and
Ms. Statistic
said "I" was "that"
the door
to my self-esteem
was shut.
Tight. But,
the windows
to my ignorance
were open.
Wide.
I knew I needed
Mr. Turner
Mr. Douglass
Mr. King
Somehow,
They'd help me
Find me—
But the door was shut.
Somehow,
In my twenties
Freedom found me.*

*God said:
"You are Mine"
I didn't know
Who "I"
belonged to...
I didn't know "I"
Could move mountains
Could catch a star
Could fight an army
Could save a life
Could sing a song
Could finish school...
But God knew.
And somewhere in my
twenties*

*He sent freedom
For me
And He found me—
Somewhere in my twenties.*

*Freedom shook hard.
And when I awakened
(100 years after Lincoln)
I saw He had
Opened the door!
Closed the windows!
Let me see
the flowers
in His garden.
"I" was one.
Brown, beautiful, fragrant
Useful
Growing with purpose
And definition
Capable
Color full, joyful
And for my nation:
Dutiful
Somewhere in my troubles—
Freedom found me.*



Robin Alisa White is a Brooklyn-born writer whose talents also include that of a musician/songwriter and graphic artist. Her career in writing began in her teen years and developed steadily over the past ten years.

ST. PAUL'S

(for Anna Mae Chaney)

I.

Built that church,
some of my people;
uncles an' cousins a' mine
so I was always proud
to see Us
crossin' the green an' yellow
waves of earth
behin' those ten black men.
Ten men
who walked from their fields
to this listenin'-place.

Laid the lime
Hauled the logs
Cupped their hands an' sealed the cracks
Stamped their weight
into the foundation
an' christened the altar
with their sweat.

Saw a Black Self
stand up in their vision
and crowned in the presence of God.

II.

singin' risin'
just as even as sweetbread—
sometime
we get hold of a sound, an' it just grow an'
grow,
right up to the middle of the roof;

them altos and tenors float on up
there an' sit like han'made icin'—
we had cooked that thing,
an' hushed it down to cool!

then Sista Hazel
break in like rain,
Sweep up the crumbs
an' wash it all down
from the wooden bones of the Church,
Yes, Lord!
We'd be baptized
in that music,
an' holdin' hands with the spirits!

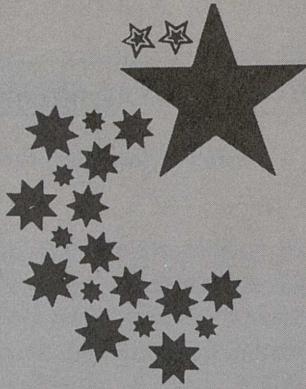
III.

seem like at Easter,
the little Church kinda
got its newness then;
Azalea an' honeysuckle chains
danced the crossin' beams
an' sweetened all our clothes

you look back of your wagon
an' see the farmfolks,
their teeth whitened by the sun
their necks up straight
an' their children,
so clean an' combed,
comin' like the colors of spring!
If we was poor,
that day we didn't know it

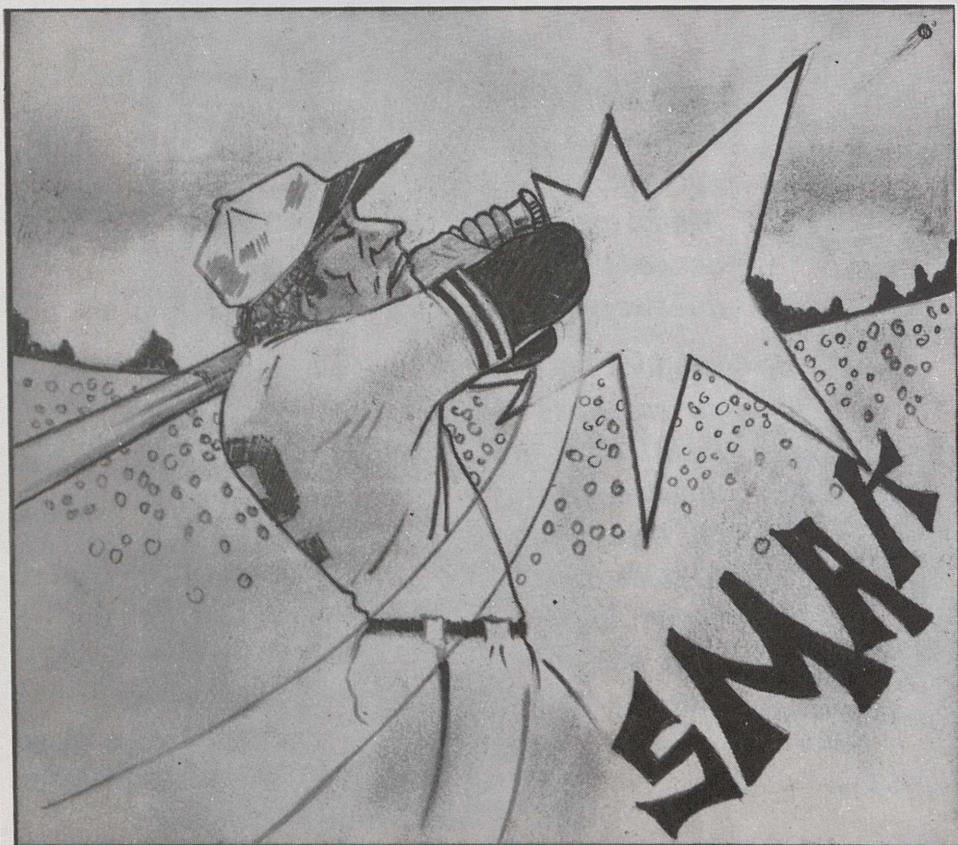
Nzadi Zimele Keita
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania





CHICOPEE TO BROOKLYN

By Beverley Byer





CHARLES EPPES '88

What the hell was that noise out there, Luke?" the voice from the lumberyard shack asked.

"A goddamn baseball just came flying into the yard. The son of a beehive almost hit me," Luke yelled back.

Dallan Montague put down his mug of iced tea and stepped out of the shack. He cupped his hands to his mouth.

"Where is it?" his voice echoing off the great piles of lumber.

"Back by the two-by-fours. I'm going to have a look in the street. Some punk kids must be having fun with us." A few minutes later, Luke came back to the two-by-fours and found Dallan looking at the ball.

"I didn't see any kids in the street," he said, "just some cop directing traffic and all the cars were stopped."

"You think a pigeon dropped it?" Dallan asked with a smile.

"Don't be funny," Luke snapped. "The damn thing almost hit me in the head."

"I think it came from over there," Dallan pointed towards Ebbets Field.

Luke turned to look at the distant wall. "Are you crazy? You're going to stand here and tell me, Luke Roosevelt Hughson, that a baseball cleared that forty foot wall, crossed Bedford Avenue, passed J.J. Hart's used car lot, cleared our fourteen foot fence and landed in Thompson's lumberyard. Is that what you're telling me?"

Continued on page 16



Continued from page 15

*"Well, Luke tapped the ashes out of his pipe and put it in his pocket,
"tell me how that baseball got here."*

"Aah, you're all hot and bothered. Come over to the shack and have some iced tea. I'll tell you how I think it got here," Dallan consoled his pal.

"Okay, but this better be good." The two walked side by side to the shack. Dallan's massive six feet two frame towered over his small, slim co-worker's.

"Great, the bench is in the shade already," Luke said as they reached the old wooden shack.

"Yeah. You just sit right down and I'll get the tea," Dallan offered pushing the door.

Luke pulled his hands out of his dirty overalls; sat with his back and head against the wall of the shack; lit his pipe and waited.

"Hey in there. Where's my iced tea?" he hollered after looking at his pocket watch.

"Coming," Dallan hollered back. "I'm just marking the calendar. It might be important. What's today's date, anyway?"

"July 10, 1947," Luke laughs. "He doesn't know what day of the week it is and he's going to tell me how that baseball got into this yard. I think . . ." he stopped to blow smoke in the air. "I think Mr. Thompson's boy threw that ball on the roof and it just now rolled off." He turned and saw Dallan coming with a tall glass of iced tea. "Ahh, here he is."

Dallan handed him the glass and sat down. Luke drank the liquid in one gulp.

"Man, that was good. How about a refill?" He handed the glass back to Dallan.

"Sorry. You just finished the last of it."

"Well," Luke tapped the ashes out of his pipe and put it in his pocket, "tell me how that baseball got here."

Dallan took the baseball from his pants pocket and placed it in Luke's small, calloused hand. "Look at that ball," he told him, "Look real close and you will see it's a brand new ball. It also has the name Spalding stamped on it; also the signature of the National League's president, Ford C. Frick. That's no kid's ball. That's a big league ball."

Luke surveyed the ball in his hand while Dallan continued.

"We also know they hit some runs over the wall into Bedford Avenue lots of times and they bounce into Hart's used car lot. I think this is a king-size home run ball."

"Maybe you're right," Luke responded half-convinced. "Where's Mr. Thompson?"

"Out on business."

"Good. I'll bring my car into the yard and put on the radio. Maybe we can find out if you're right." He rose, putting the ball in his pocket. "You can open the gate for me."

Luke blew the horn of his 1936 Ford and Dallan swung open the big gate with a smile.

"That auto belongs in a junkyard not in a lumberyard."

"It takes me where I want to go," Luke replied a bit sarcastic. "Where will I park?"

"By the shack and drive nice and slow. I don't want you to put anymore dents on your auto. There's no more room," Dallan chuckled closing the gate behind the car.

The yard was filled with lumber. Business had been good since the war ended. Luke had to skillfully maneuver his car toward the shack. He was trying to find the station on the radio when Dallan opened the door and got in.

"That's it! That's it!" he said closing the door.

"Crowd is still buzzing about that high drive over the scoreboard and into Bedford Avenue by Ernie Lombardi, folks," bellows the voice from the radio. "The New York Giants lead the Brooklyn Dodgers two to nothing at the end of four innings. Now, we pause for this Wheaties commercial."

Luke turned the radio off. Both men could not stop laughing.

"What do you think now, Mr. Luke Roosevelt Hughson?" Dallan asked poking his pal's shoulder.

"I think you're the smartest black mule this side of Atlantic Avenue, Mr. Dallan Charles Montague," Luke poked him back. Both men laughed again.

"Well, no strike today. I got work to do," Dallan opened the car door, "and I guess I'll have to finish yours too."

"Finish my work? What are you talking about?"

"You're going to take the ball back, aren't you?" A frown crossed Dallan's large, round face.

"Not on your life," Luke answered, "let them come looking for it. They would never believe a Negro coming through the door with overalls and a big cock-and-bull story like that. No, let them come to me," he thumbed his chest.

"But it's no cock-and-bull story. You have me as a witness," Dallan protested.

"Sure, and you're a Negro too. They will not believe us, Dallan. Take my word. They will not believe us."

"So what will you do?" Luke played with his moustache. "Nothing. We wait. When they come looking for the ball and see us with it, they will believe the ball landed in the yard and who knows, it might be worth some money to them." He started the engine. "I'd better get this car out of here before the boss comes back."

"Okay," Dallan answered getting out, "but I think you're wrong. I would take the ball back and take my chances," he slammed the door shut. "No, we wait," Luke said firmly, "and say nothing to nobody, hear?"

MY PEOPLE ON THE RUN

Ain't nobody into bein' Black no mo'

See some real bad sisters on the streets

*We usta sit an' rap 'bout leadin' our children
to Freedom*

Now all they kin say

in a soft voice is "hi Aisha

is Crystall ready for school

an' chile why don't you get her

a Curl Free"

Aisha Eshe

He leaned over and brushed back a few weeds then put his huge hand on top of the stone and tried to shake it as if to wake a sleeping friend.

The following day, the two old buddies were sitting on the bench finishing their lunch. Luke turned to Dallan and asked, "How was that roast beef sandwich?"

"Delicious and nutritious. Your Dottie packs a real good lunch. Thank her for me, but milk to wash it down?"

"Yeah. That was my idea. We want to be cold sober when they come for the baseball. We can drink plenty of beer when we get the reward money."

"What makes you think there'll be reward money?"

"Hey, you heard that guy on the radio. That ball was a Lombardi cannon ball and this is his last season. He's 39 years old. For all we know, it may be the longest ball hit."

"Hmm. I hope you're right, but this waiting makes me nervous. I thought they would come yesterday after the game."

"Relax. They will come," Luke Hughson assured his friend. "I have been reading all about how they make baseballs, last night. Did you know they make them in Chicopee, Massachusetts? And they weigh five ounces and are made out of horsehide!"

"Does your book say when they will come for the ball," Dallan teased.

"Relax," Luke said.

"Relax hell. It's one o'clock. Time to get to work."

Eight baseball seasons came and went. The young man behind the wheel thought to himself. "This is all very odd. Uncle Dallan taking a day off from work to go all the way to Staten Island to visit a grave? I wonder who is buried there that he knows? He's been very quiet the entire day. Come to think of it, he's been acting strange since yesterday."

"Stop the car here, Howard. This is the place." Howard Montague helped his uncle out of the brand new 1955 Olds.

"The church looks closed," he said. Dallan adjusted his fedora. "That's alright. I don't want to go in. I just want to visit a grave at the back."

Young Howard watched his uncle limp around the corner. "Want me to come with you, Uncle Dallan?" he shouted after him.

"No. Wait there. I won't be long."

Dallan limped to the side of the church and into the small graveyard at the back. He stopped, removed his hat and knelt down before a granite tombstone. He traced his fingers along the writing. Luke Roosevelt Hughson. Born June 23, 1895. Died December 2, 1951. He leaned over and brushed back a few weeds then put his huge hand on top of the stone and tried to shake it as if to wake a sleeping friend.

"I came to tell you the news, Luke. It's me, Dallan. Some big newspaper people came to the yard yesterday and were asking about the ball. They said a traffic cop on Bedford Avenue saw it come out of Ebbets Field and fly into the yard. They said they want to do a story about Ernie Lombardi. They're trying to get him into the Hall of Fame and they think we could help. They think the ball traveled over 600 feet. They think it was one of his last home runs in the big leagues. They offered me \$500! I told them everything, Luke. I told them how we waited all those years for someone to come after the baseball." Dallan pulled out his handkerchief and wiped his eyes. "All those years. We waited too long, Luke. We should have done like I wanted. You should have taken the ball back. Now you're in that dark, cold hole and I don't know where the ball is. Dottie doesn't know anything about

it. You never told her. Only you know where it is. The newspaper people can't do the story without that ball. That's the real proof." Dallan blew his nose and continued, his eyes filling with tears again, "Luke, we would have gotten reward money. You were right there, my friend and; and we would have made the papers too." He grew silent for a while and pulled on the weeds around him and brushed away others. Then leaning heavily on the stone, he rose to his feet. "I have to go now, Luke. My nephew is waiting. But I'll be back soon. I don't like all those weeds around here. Nobody's taking care of nothing."

Howard looked at his watch and wondered what his uncle was doing so long. Remembering his recent foot surgery, he decided to go look for him. As he rounded the corner, he saw his uncle coming out of the graveyard head bent, hat clutched tightly to his chest.

"Are you alright, Uncle Dallan?" He met his uncle halfway and took his arm.

"Hmm. I'll be fine, Son. I'll be fine."

"Who's buried there?" Howard continued as he helped his uncle into the car. He walked around to the driver's side, got in and waited on an answer.

Dallan sighed. "It's a long story, Son. A long story. It all started eight years ago. Let's go to the ballgame this afternoon and I'll tell you all about it. We can go early to Ebbets Field and watch the batting practice. Maybe get a ball that was made in Chicopee."

Howard started the engine and headed for Brooklyn. "They don't make baseballs in Chicopee anymore, Uncle Dallan."

Two years later, September, 1957, the Brooklyn Dodgers played their last game in Ebbets Field and old Dallan Montague decided it was time that he too retired. Three days after he left the lumberyard, the new man reported an accident he had with the old forklift to the boss. Thompson, Jr. came out of the office with the new man and walked toward the shack to investigate.

"I couldn't help it, Mr. Thompson. The brakes are bad and this bench here and some of those flower pots got smashed."

"Yes, I see. Lucky the bench was there. You may have injured yourself."

"Yes, Sir," the new man agreed.

"It's time to get a new lift. I can trade in this old one," Thompson said.

"What do I do about the bench, Sir?"

"Go find a hammer and take it apart then junk it. Throw away all those flower pots too." Thompson headed back to his office.

The new man found an empty drum and dragged it to the debris. He began to dump the broken flower pots first. One pot, he noticed, had some kind of round lump in it. He picked it up and wiped away most of the mud. It was a badly decomposed ball. "Wonder how long this been in the flower pot?" he asked himself, "It's no good to anybody anymore." He tossed it in the drum, picked up his hammer and headed toward the bench.



Beverley Byer is from Brooklyn, NY and has previously published in Glamour, World Tennis and Jive magazines. Her inspiration for this story came from an article in the November, 1985 Baseball Digest that dealt with a possible new home run record for a professional player.



Faith Ringgold



Introduction by Linnette Williams
Pittsburgh, PA

For me, the word quilt brings back memories of my grandmother meticulously hand stitching endless scraps of material, piece-by-piece, to form a cover that usually lay at the foot of the bed—unless it was an exceptionally cold night.

Her quilts rarely matched the decor and came in a variety of sizes, shapes and colors. At the end of winter, they were tucked into a cedar chest filled with mothballs. I seriously doubt that my grandmother perceived quilt making as an art or craft, when she sat down to begin her stitching. Quilt making was simply something that had been passed to each generation by the women in her family.

But Faith Ringgold has mixed art and stitchery to produce stunning results.

Ringgold combines her talent as a painter, writer and sculptor to produce quilts that depict stories of Black

people she knew growing up.

A Harlem-born artist, Ringgold received her B.S. and M.A. degrees from the City College of New York. She emerged as a national figure during the '60s and '70s, at which time many of her paintings were categorized as "protest art or political art." According to Ringgold, not many of her peers appreciated or understood her paintings. Her story quilts evolved out of her need for self-expression.

"I started doing story quilts because I had written an autobiography and couldn't get it published... So here is another way of getting writing published—that hasn't been edited. That isn't looked over and where nobody's telling me, there can never be Black people like that. I don't have that problem because I just put it directly on my quilts."

A descendant of a slave woman who made quilts for her masters and the daughter of a noted Harlem fashion designer, the seeds for her unique artistic medium were planted during childhood.

"It seemed natural," she said. "I looked around and saw the quilts, dolls, beadwork—all so-called craft and I just used the hand materials women had always used."

Each one of Ringgold's quilts tells a different story. The quilt shown here is *The Street Story Quilt* (1985). It tells the story of a child named A.J. who is orphaned in a Harlem tenement and left to grow up the best way he can.

Pictures in this three-paneled quilt alternate between the written text. Until recently, most of the stories have been personal. For example, *Change: Faith Ringgold's Over 100 Pounds*

Weight Loss Story (1986), tells of her personal challenge to change. However, in *The Purple Quilt* (1986), Ringgold depicts the story of Alice Walker's, *The Color Purple*.

Faith Ringgold's work has been exhibited at the Spectrum and Bernice Steinbaum Galleries in New York; the Voorhees Gallery at Rutgers University, in New Jersey; the DeLand Museum in Florida. Her group exhibitions include showings in major museums in Germany, Nigeria, Japan and Asia.

Ringgold was presented with an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts (DFA) from Moore College of Art in Philadelphia, and the College of Wooster, in Wooster, Ohio. She has won the Creative Artists Public Service Award (CAPS), along with her two most recent awards; the Carter G. Woodson Foundation Award 1987; and The Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship 1987.

Ringgold is a wife, mother and teacher who says, "From the time I was an infant, what my mother gave me was not only books and crayons and paper but also fabric... I was always trying to make something with it, but what I made never looked perfect—it always looked homemade... It was a long time before I saw that that was the point. I had made it; it was mine..."





THE STREET STORY AND QUILT

By Faith Ringgold

PART I: The Accident

Ain nobody on this street gonna ever forget that accident. All them cars piled up right outside this door? An everybody in 'em dead but Big Al. It wasn't real. They was just goin to Coney Island for some corn on the cob. And the next thing we know Big Al was on the sidewalk screamin, "I killed my wife and four of my sons."

An A.J. was holdin his father in his arms like he was a baby. Big Al ain kill nobody, the car behind him was at fault. Come drivin through here like he on a race track. Made a sandwich outa Big Al's car and a car parked in front of him. That bastard died instantly.

And a pregnant woman and her husband going to the hospital to deliver was in the parked car. They all died too. You might know it was a drunken fool in a stolen car that hit 'em. We was smellin liquor 'round here for a month after they cleaned up that mess. Next day 222 came straight. Everybody had it but me.

Sure was strange A.J. didn't go that day. Cause everywhere Big Al went in that big ole Cadillac the whole street had to know it. He got to round up all them five boys. If he ain going no further than the corner, they all got to go. An A.J. always the first in the car.

But that day they was all callin Big Al from the window, "Wait for us Daddy." Somehow Big Al didn't want the boys to go. Just him an Lilly was goin. "You kids stay home with your gramma," he yelled up to them. Anyhow they all got in the car except for A.J. He stayed home with Ma Teedy.

They was playin Chinese Checkers an A.J. was winning. I heard Ma Teedy an A.J. yellin, "Abraham Lincoln Jones," that was A.J.'s name, "Boy you cheatin now for true." "You always say that when I win gramma." And then that horrible crash. An we all rushed to our front windows.

A.J. was 10 years old when his mother and four brothers died in that car crash. He was the oldest an they say he was the favorite cause he was so smart. He could remember the whole street's daily numbers by heart, single action or combined, didn't need no slips. A.J. wrote a dream sheet I'm still playin from. I hit for \$2.00 last week off one of A.J.'s tips. He was a wiz kid.

Big Al was supposed to be a newspaper writer. Always using a lot of big words. ain nobody but A.J. know what he talkin 'bout half the time. They say

he used to get somethin in the Amsterdam News now an then, but the only thing I ever seen him write was numbers. An if you wanted a fifth of whiskey after the liquor store closed you could get it from Big Al for twice the price. Or anything else you wanted. Big Al was a hustler, an Lilly was sweet like a little doll.

Lilly an Big Al was just kids when A.J. was born. Thirteen and sixteen that's all. It was 1952. I remember cause that was the year I come north to stay with my cousin. She lived next door to Ma Teedy. Ma Teedy was having this big wedding for Lilly and Big Al. And Lilly's big belly was rippin thru her white weddin gown. Lord. I had to drop my bags and sit right to the machine, tired as I was from that bus ride.

That's the first I saw Ma Teedy. After that I used to sew all Ma Teedy's show clothes. She was a singing bar maid at the Skylark Bar. "Old Miss Young," that's what Big Al used to call her. I don't know how Lilly put up with Big Al. I had to put him outa here one day. Come talkin 'bout, "I sure like to get next to you Miss Gracie." I told him, "I don't want no baby-makin man like you." No sir. Not me.

After the accident A.J. and Big Al started drinking together. You ain never see a big old 6½ foot man with his little boy, an they both drunk. Ma Teedy likena died when she saw 'em. Big Al took A.J. to stay at his girl friend's house. Hussy! She supposed to be Lilly's best friend.

She and Big Al cryin 'bout how they loved Lilly an all. Standin up there in her see-through night gown, and him in his shorts. Brazen as can be. Right in front of A.J. Well God don't love ugly. They ain gonna have no luck with they sinful ways.

Part 2: The Fire

It was Big Al an his girl friend caused that fire. They wasn't burnin no garbage either. They was both dead drunk. Now they both dead. An they almost took all us in the house with 'em. Ain nothin but the will of God control that fire 'fore it burn down this house. We all got out in time with a few things. Smoke and water took everything else we had. All left is this burned out shell, ain fit for a dog to live in.

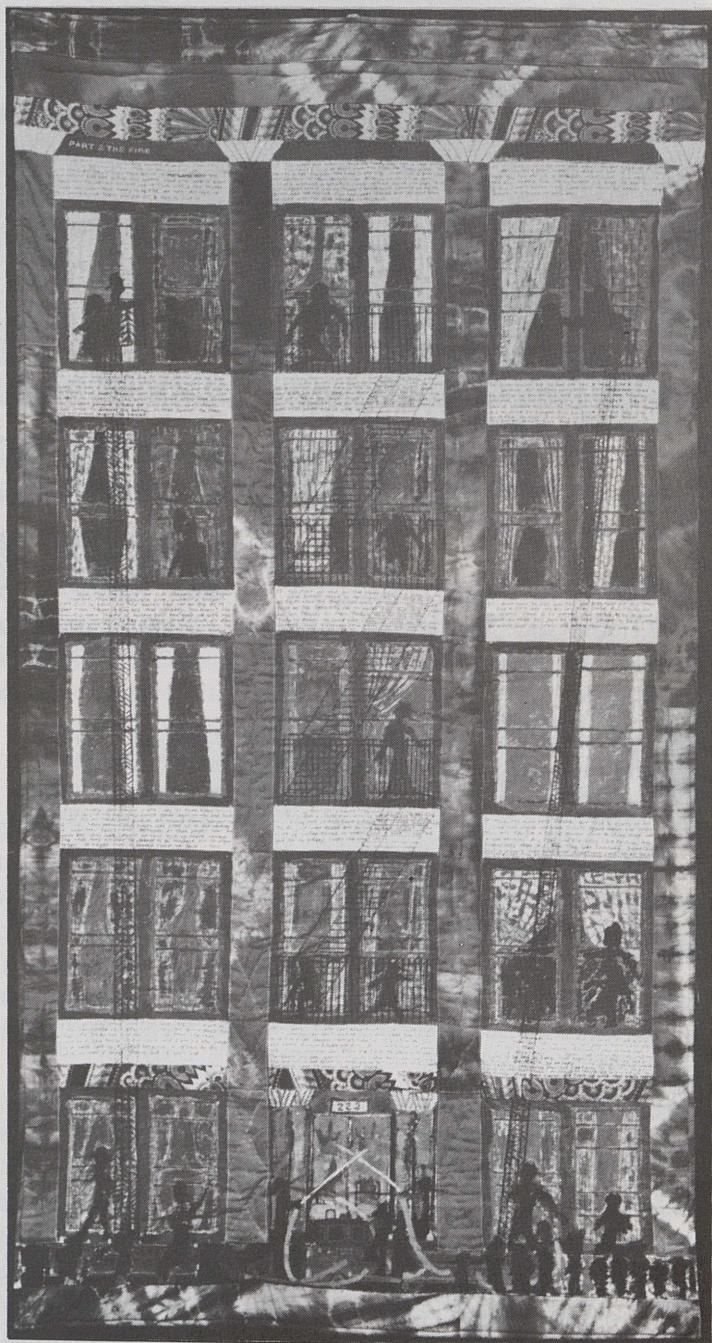


PART 1 THE ACCIDENT



I told him, "I don't want no baby makin' man like you."

PART 2 THE FIRE

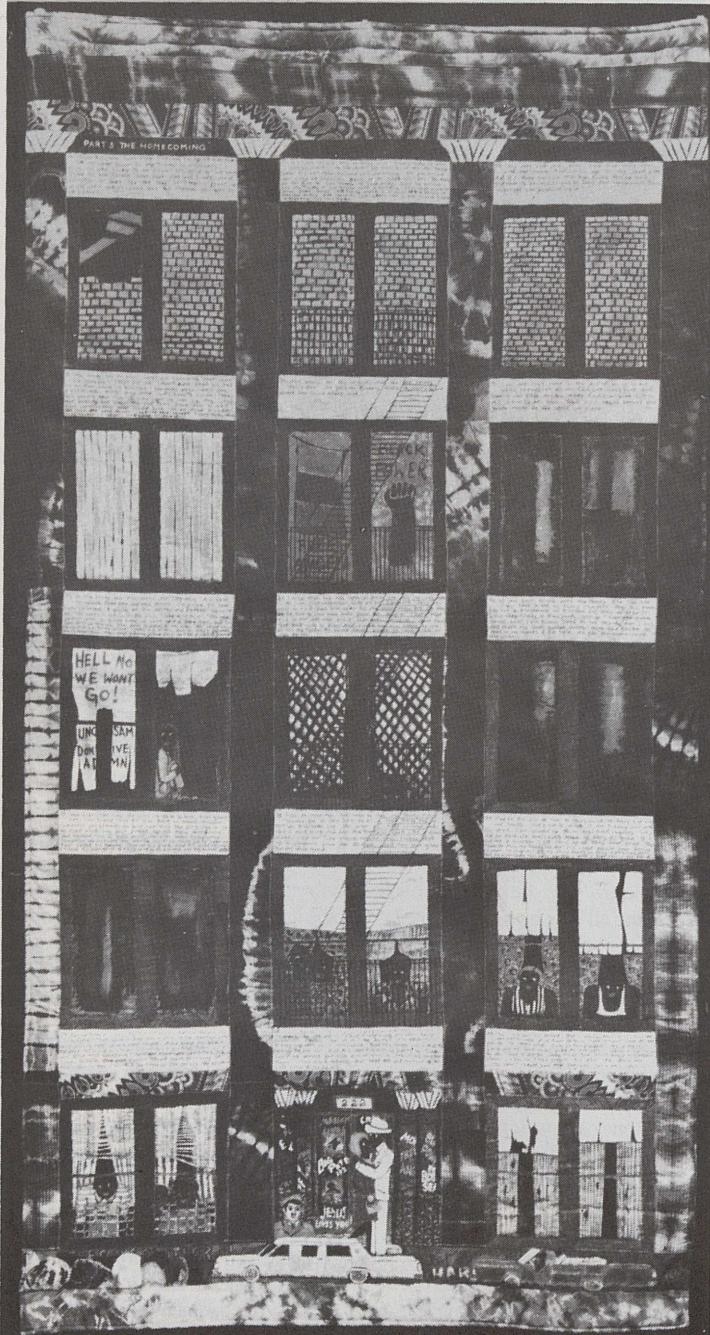


He used to tip off Big Al when the Mafia was comin'...



PART 3

THE HOME COMING



*A.J. made that kick into
a kiss*

Street Story & Quilt Continued from page 19

I knew when they give Big Al that janitor job he was gonna mess up. Big Al wasn't used to workin for nobody. He was a loud mouthed son-of-a-gun, but he was intelligent, had book learnin, and pride. You know? He just wasn't no super. Big Al wasn't no good after that accident. He couldn't forgive hisself for Lilly and the boy's death. Just tried to drown his sorrow in that bottle. An May, his girl friend wasn't no better.

I seen May the day of the fire shoppin at the super market. High as a Georgia pine, pushin a shoppin cart full of beer. Say the doctor had her an Big Al on beer now. Taperin 'em off that whiskey. You know? She should a been shame of herself quit her good job with the telephone company to lay up there drunk all day everyday with Big Al. And ain care who know it either. Say she takin care of Big Al for Lilly. God rest her soul. Deceitful wench.

They musta been smokin in bed. They ain even know there was no fire, the way they found them laying on the bed buck naked, an all them beer bottles all around them, burned to a crisp. Newspapers and books was piled up to the ceilin all over they apartment. Between all that paper, beer and what ever they was smokin and doin layin up there naked like that they ain had no chance to go nowhere but straight to hell. Or maybe they in heaven, cause we sure in hell.

A.J. ran away from home right after Big Al's funeral. He was picked up a few days later for sellin dope to a cop. Ma Teedy got him off with out time. She real dramatic you know. Went cryin and promisin the judge she'd take care of A.J. and keep him in school and all cause he was a minor. Wasn't but 12 years old.

Say what you want to 'bout Ma Teedy, she was a real woman. She raised Lilly up alone from the time Pa Teedy died. Say he was a cat burglar. The best in the city. Come out a 8th floor fur factory window carryin over \$100,000.00 worth of furs. Landed without a scratch. Came uptown offed the furs, and got mugged comin out of Mabel's Rendevous Lounge on 116th Street and 7th Avenue. Two hop heads robbed him an left him for dead with two stab wounds in his chest.

That was before I come north. I just know Ma Teedy from livin in the buildin and singin at the Skylark. I like her cause she a survivor. Always keep herself an her family lookin good. Keep a ice box full of food. And don't never cry the blues. And she got a lot to cry 'bout. People's talk 'bout her an the Captain of the precinct. Say she need to quit foolin 'round with that white man in front of A.J.

But ain't for that white man A.J. been in reform school instead of the army. An he used to tip off Big Al when the Mafia was comin up town. Now I don't trust no cop, specially not no white cop, but if it wasn't for Tom Cassidy all them Teedy's been in jail from Pa Teedy on down. He cried like a baby at Lilly an her boys' funeral. You'd a thought that white man was one of the family the way he carried on.

Some of them got a heart. They ain't *all* out to get us. Big Al been a white man, with his book readin, he'd a been a big shot in this town without the college education. Big Al just never could get no real break in life. Ain none of us can count on nothin but a kick in the ass. God be my judge! That's the way I see it.

A.J. been in trouble ever since Big Al died in that fire. Ma Teedy near bout give up tryin with that boy. First he sellin dope, stolen clothes, then he had a little ole gal out there turnin tricks for him. An he wasn't but 13 years old. Every mornin God send Ma Teedy be down there, "Abraham Lincoln Jones, get your rusty butt up out that bed and wash off some of that funk fore you go to school." But most days he never did.

A.J. was growin up now and sometime for days at a time he wouldn't come home. He dropped out of school and took Big Al's old job of number controller. You couldn't tell him nothin now. He collected his slips at his girl friend Tina's house. She lived over there on Lenox an '35th Street. A.J. moved in with her.

Tina wasn't but 16 but she had a head like a old woman. Her mother and father shot each other dead on the corner of 8th avenue and 125th Street one Sunday mornin, with all the peoples goin to church.

Continued on page 22

Say it was like a western movie. So Tina raised herself. She taught A.J. to drive, and bought him his first car for his 13th birthday. He kept it parked in front of her house so Ma Teedy didn't know bout it.

I don't need to tell you Tina got pregnant for A.J. They had a little boy. We all call him Little A.J., cause he the spittin image of his father. A.J. tried to be a good father to that boy, but he was too young to be a father. He wasn't but 15 years old when that boy was born.

Mojo, the numbers banker, got shot to death in his Cadillac right outside Tina's apartment one night. Mojo was carryin a lot of money from a drug drop, and it was missin. A.J., Tina and the baby had to run. The rumor was that A.J. and Tina was involved. Somethin bout a Mafia take over from downtown. Lord! We ain see A.J. for over a year. Tina and the baby went to Jamaica, West Indies to her people, an A.J. hid out in the South Bronx.

When the Vietnam war come, A.J. went on in the army. I guess tha boy was so tired of runnin even that war looked safer than the street. Anyway they found out it was a cop shot Mojo. The same one run Big Al out the numbers so he had to take that super's job. The cop was workin for the Mafia, so nobody could prove nothin. And Tom Cassidy, the police precinct captain, he retired real quick to the Bahamas. Without so much as a goodbye to Ma Teedy. And they never did come up with that missin money.

Part 3: The Homecoming

When A.J. come home from Vietnam his spirit was broken. He came home to Ma Teedy on crutches. I guess he was lucky to be alive. We used to sit and listen to him talkin bout that war for hours. He'd threaten to jump off the roof or step in front of a car and get crushed like his Mama. He was so depressed.

Ma Teedy would say to him, "What you gonna do bout your old granma? I still love ya. I don't care what you had to do over there in Vietnam. Men folks been makin and fightin wars since they said, 'Let's have a world!' They ain gonna stop now. So why I got to lose my boy? I ain got nobody but you. Now you come back here to die? That ain't nothin new 'round here. We all dead already. We just ain laid down. Look at this street. Everybody done move, except us that's trapped, or dead.

"No Ma Teedy you ain gonna die like this," A.J. said, "I'm gonna take you off this street. I'm gonna be somebody granma. I gonna be the writer my father couldn't be." "He wasn't nothin but a bum," she told him. "No my father was a great man, he just had a bad life, but he was still a genius. You have to admit he was. He read everything and he knew a lot." "Yeah A.J. honey but he didn't do nothin. You do somethin with your life. Make your granma proud. Cause I'm tired of cryin at funerals."

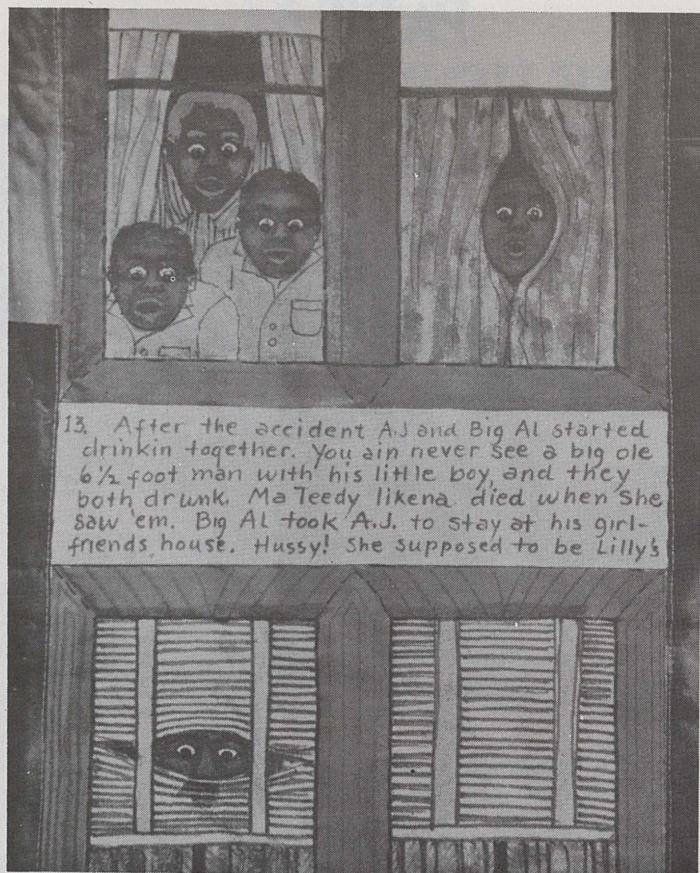
And that's the way she used to talk to him. Real quiet like. And before long A.J. was back in school studyin computer programmin, an goin out with the girls again. In no time that boy just picked up all them machines an landed a good payin job with some computer company downtown. He musta work on that job a year or two. Saved his money. Got on his feet. And the next thing we knew A.J. was gone to Paris Lord to be a writer like Big Al never was.

Say he had a story to tell. What you call a autobiography. That book made him a best sellin author with a starring role in his own movie. And bless his heart he done received an Oscar nomination for best actor. Lord God ain't this somethin? Now you know you can't tell Ma Teedy nothin. She just runnin 'round here grinnin at everybody, braggin on A.J. an cryin in the street she so proud.

A.J. due home any minute now. Everybody on the street waitin to see him. He comin to get Ma Teedy. Takin her out this burned out building. He promised her when he left for Paris he be back for her. He knew all the time he was gonna be somebody. Said he gonna buy Ma Teedy a big house with a garden. Now that promise done come true. Ma Teedy leavin 222 West 146th Street in Harlem today. She goin to live where the grass grows green 12 months out the year. And where the sky is clear blue. And the sun shines everyday. She goin to Beverly Hills in Hollywood where the movie stars live.

I knew that boy was special from the day he was born. He was just different with all his badness. Peoples used to talk 'bout him after his Ma died, then his Pa died, and he had to run and hide from the Mafia. That's that kick in the ass the black man gets. But A.J. done made that kick into a kiss. And I just love him cause he ain forget Ma Teedy. And he ain forget where he come from, or who he is.

Tina be here too. She come to see Ma Teedy every Sunday she in New York,



an bring that little boy of hers an A.J. with her. She wear her hair in dred locks. Got it dyed brick red like Ma Teedy's. Look like a lion's mane. Well Tina singin reggae now. Picked that up in Jamaica from the Rostas. Got her own group too and doin good.

You know Tina she goes way out for anything she want. So she all on TV and travelling all over havin concerts. I guess she an A.J. be bumpin into each other in they big cars out in Hollywood. But Ma Teedy want A.J. to own up to his son. But A.J. don't want no parts of Tina. Say Tina almost got him killed messin with Miko and that Mafia money back there. But that ain't got nothin to do with Little A.J. Do it?

They was both kids then. Tina done come thru with her music, and raisin up her boy some fine. And A.J. done survive Harlem, South Bronx and Vietnam to be successful in Paris and Hollywood. Time to forget the past. Ain't it.

I for one can't wait to see A.J. drive up in his white chauffeur driven Cadillac limousine, and Tina in her lilac custom made Cadillac with little A.J. sittin by her side. Well sir! 146th Street ain gonna never be the same no more.

We all sure gonna miss Ma Teedy. She say she comin back to see us every summer. Say A.J. gonna buy her a brownstone in Harlem for them to stay in when they comes to New York. Well if I ever get from 'round here, I ain comin back to see nobody but Jesus. And that's the God's honest truth. Hope God strike me dead in my tracks if I'm lyin. An she ain comin back here either.

Maybe A.J. fly me out to Hollywood to hang out with the swells. Put a little drink in me I hang out with the devil. I ain scared of those high toned negroes. They ain no better'n me. I don't know if they as good. If I hit me a number I just show up at they door step. Say, "How do Miss Ma Teedy and Mr. A.J. I just passin your house thought I'd drop in." Dip my tired bones in they fabulous pool. Get me a poolside tan, layin up there with a high ball in my hand. Too rich for my blood!

But I gonna ask A.J. when he get here. Say, "A.J. Aunt Gracie sure would like to see you an Ma Teedy fine house in Hollywood." Here he is! Lord ain he look some fine all dressed in white from head to toe? Got a white chauffeur too. Write down his license plate number so I can play it. A.J. 222-146. Bless his little heart. I told you that boy was somethin special.



BLACKS AND STROKE

by Aisha Rice

The women crowded into the hospital's waiting room, tragedy once again bringing them together. This time it was Grandma. After complaining of a severe headache, she became irritable and couldn't recall the names of her great-grandchildren. She had suffered a mild stroke.

The relief—that it was mild—was short-lived. Three years later she was hit again. This time so hard her left side was paralyzed, her speech impaired and she had trouble recalling her own daughters' names. While she was hospitalized she suffered two more.

Stroke is the No. 3 killer and leading cause of long-term disability in America and is most pronounced in blacks. Stroke occurs when the brain's blood supply is impeded and the brain momentarily stops functioning. The damage can cause vision loss and paralysis—like Grandma's—or death.

Grandma was taken to Harmarville Rehabilitation Center in Pittsburgh after her worst stroke. Her body lacked strength so she had to be fastened with a makeshift seat belt into her wheelchair. Her neck muscles were so weak, her head bobbed like a newborn baby's. At night she was strapped to the bed so she wouldn't fall out. Many of the other patients had sagging, crooked faces, some permanently distorted by paralysis.

Stress, alcohol, obesity, lack of proper nutrition and excessive intake of salt all nurture the hypertension that leads to cerebral hemorrhagic stroke—the kind in which an artery bursts and spouts blood into the brain. Hypertension is three times more common in blacks than whites. Because, although Americans consume 10 times more sodium than they need, black people excrete less than whites so the sodium stays in our bodies. Dr. Clarence E. Grim of the Charles R. Drew University of Medicine in Los Angeles, has developed a theory explaining this phenomenon. According to Grim, voyages on slave ships could have resulted in a "survival of the fittest" with those better able to retain salt more likely to live through the lack of food and water and the dehydrating seasickness and diarrhea. This more efficient use of salt, however, has

subsequently caused problems among slave descendants with salt-rich diets.

In 1980 the stroke rate among blacks nationwide was 80 percent higher than among whites. Regionally, cerebral death rates among blacks are highest in the Midwest and South, lowest in the West, while Northeast rates fall somewhere between the two. Also, research has shown that income and education determine whether or not individuals get a checkup or other preventive examinations. Since a larger percentage of black people are poor, when it comes to spending money, health care becomes secondary. By the time we make it to the doctor, it's sometimes too late.

Jamel Cross, 47, a secretary at the University of Pittsburgh, likes to cook almost as much as she likes to eat. She was 32 when a mild stroke hit her in her sleep. "It was like walking in outer space," she said, "like I was there but not there. When I tried to get up from the bed, I couldn't... my right side was paralyzed."

For Cross, the cause was stress. "I was just trying to do too much, and my body couldn't take it." Her story had a happier ending than most though. There was no permanent physical damage and so far she's had no subsequent attacks.

Help for the special needs of black stroke victims has been slow. But, within the last 20 years, free or inexpensive medical treatment and medication, or transportation assistance has been credited with bringing the black stroke rate down. In the 1960s the rate for black males and females was 140 (per 100,000). By 1983 the rate for both sexes dropped to 42. However, in 1985, black people were still twice as likely to die from stroke than whites. For stroke survivors, strong, caring and consistent family support system is as important as proper medical treatment. In that area—at least for a time—Grandma was fortunate.

Thanks primarily to her youngest daughter's constant care and support, Grandma learned to walk on her own with the help of a cane. Her speech became clear again and after a while she even cooked her



own food. On weekdays, she'd visit the Homewood-Brushton Senior Citizen's Center where she and about 30 other seniors worked on arts and crafts projects or went on field trips. The damage to her left side was still obvious, but there was hope that with time that too would improve. As for the damage to her mind, no one knew its extent. Often prone to fits of verbal and physical attacks on family members, her behavior was none-the-less tolerable, at times even amusing.

Around the middle of November, 1987, my mother began to notice troublesome changes. Grandma's complaints of weariness increased. Each day she had to be forced to sit up in the livingroom chair, and each day she made the same request: "Can I go to bed now, I need some rest." She became more antagonistic, dug her nails into her daughters, kicked people and swore at whomever she pleased. It was as if she wanted to do battle with the world for cursing her with this affliction. She visited the senior citizen's center less and stayed in bed all the time.

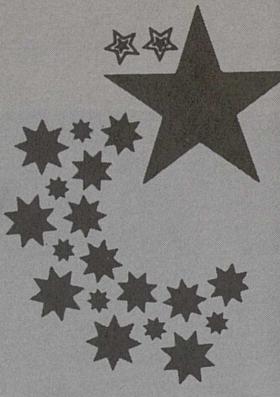
On the morning of December 10, Grandma had a seizure. My mother, who was with her, gave her mouth to mouth resuscitation, and drove her to Montefiore Hospital. At 9:40 that evening, Grandma died.

Hypertension can be controlled and even reduced with proper diet, exercise and rest. Priority, however, must be placed on prevention, not treatment. When we neglect our health, we do ourselves a serious injustice.



Aisha Rice is a mother, native Pittsburgher and free-lance writer. Her interests include children's literature, international affairs, government intelligence and sacred societies. Her hobbies are sewing, doll and puppet making and photography. She recently received her Bachelor's degree in Media Communications from the University of Pittsburgh.





THE FALL OF ADAM

By Charles W. Chesnutt

Brother Gabriel Gainey was the founder, patron, chief elder and preacher of the colored Baptist Church in 'Possum Hollow. Before the war "Bre'r Gabe" was the slave preacher on a large plantation, and his pulpit powers were developed under circumstances somewhat unfavorable to a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures or to any acquaintance with the rules of grammar. He had strong lungs, however, and a powerful imagination, and could depict the horrors of sheol with a rude realism which was very effective in bringing plantation sinners to repentance, and it was a tradition of the neighborhood that even a white man had once been converted under his preaching.

In a great crisis genuis always comes to the front. Napoleon would never, perhaps, have been Emperor, had General Menou been able to restore order in the streets of Paris. In the breaking up of society which followed the abolition of slavery, Brother Gabriel saw his chance, and determined to have a church of his own. With a little help from the Freedmen's Bureau he bought a small strip of land, and chiefly with his own hands put up the rude structure where his followers worshipped. In the fullness of his joy he christened it Hallelujah Chapel, which name it bears to this day. He gathered about him a fair-sized congregation and performed his pastoral duties with a lively zeal. He earned his living as a carpenter, the church contributions being just about sufficient to keep him in Sunday clothes. The dignity and importance of leadership were enough to satisfy the elder's moderate ambition.

One evening Elder Gainey sat by the fireplace in his little frame dwelling-house, slowly and patiently studying out a hymn which he wished to learn by heart in order to line it out the more readily the following Sabbath. A blazing pine-knot supplied him with light, and cast flickering and fantastic shadows on the walls. The elder had just decided upon a satisfactory pronunciation for a word of four syllables with which he had been wrestling, when there was a knock at the door, and he arose to admit a visitor.

"Good-evenin', Elder," said the new arrival, a tall, angular Negro, with a peculiar cranial development known as a "double head," by no means uncommon among the Southern Negroes, and generally accompanied with more than ordinary intellectual activity. Elder

Gainey greeted the visitor with becoming gravity, and the usual inquiries concerning the health of their two families and the state of the weather were exchanged, when the visitor continued:

"I 'lowed you'd be home tonight, elder, so I thought I'd come over an' ax you a few questions on one or two p'ints in de Bible, what's be'n botherin' my mind."

Brother 'Lijah Gadson, the anxious inquirer, was an active and valuable member of the elder's church. He had but one serious fault—he was fond of asking hard questions. As not a few of these fell to Elder Gainey's share as spiritual guide of the congregation, the worthy elder was frequently reminded of a certain old and popular proverb in reference to the difficulty which a wise man may sometimes find in answering the questions of a fool.

Brother 'Lijah was provided with a rush-bottomed rocking-chair, and the elder, after placing a couple of sweet potatoes before the fire, seated himself on the other side of the hearth and announced his readiness to impart information.

"Bre'r Gab'l," said 'Lijah, interrogatively, "you's pretty well acquainted wid de Bible?"

"Yas, Bre'r 'Lijah," replied the elder modestly, "dat is, I knows a little sump'n 'bout de Bible."

"Well, elder, da's one thing 'bout de Bible I never could'n understand' and dass de fall of Adam. Now I'se hearn a good 'eal 'bout dis subjic': I'se searched de Scriptures, an' axed udder folks, but after all my sarchin's an' my axin's, I ain't never yet be'n able to find out whar Adam fell from, muh how he come to fall?"

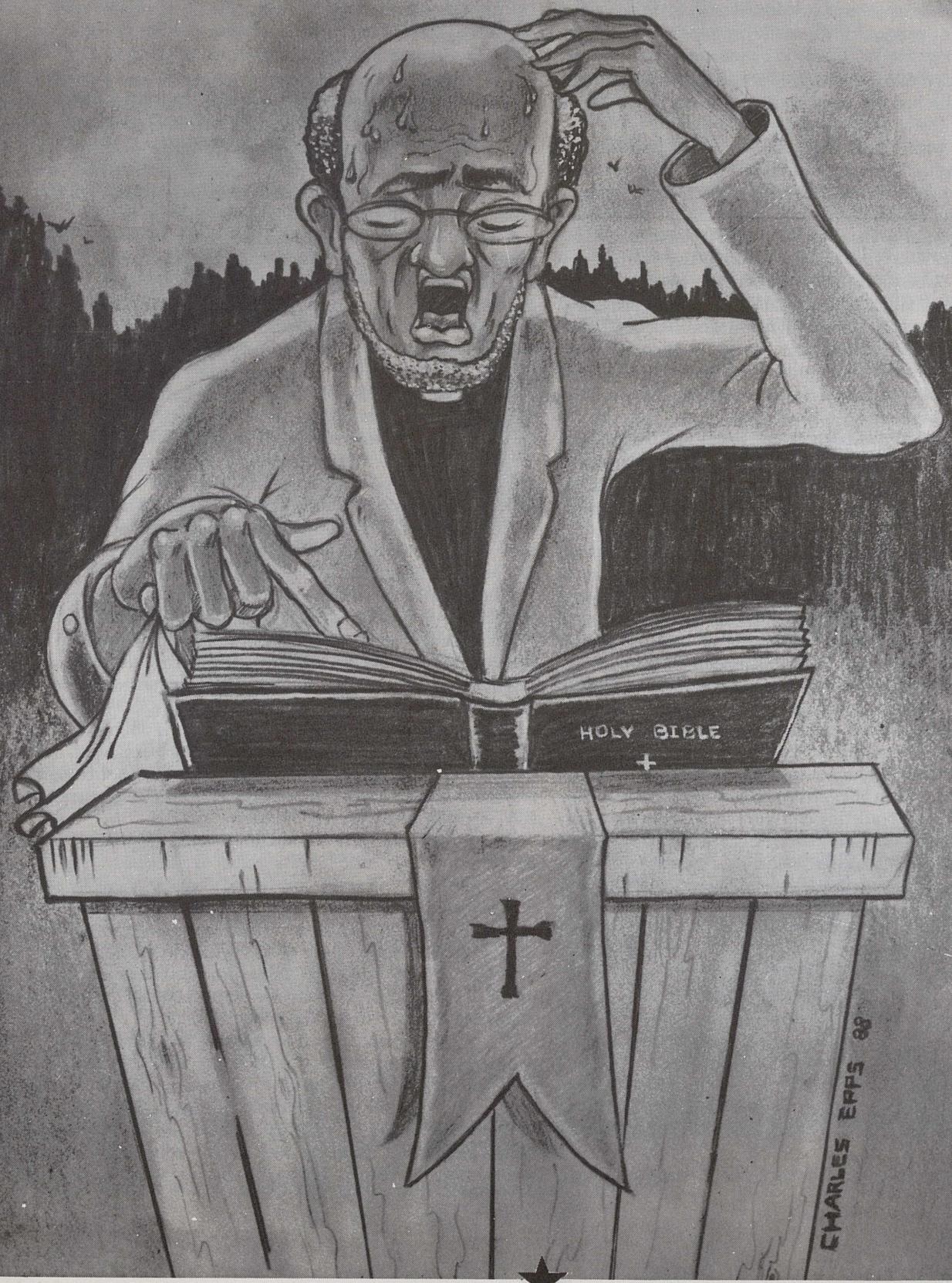
"I think," said the elder reflectively, "dat Adam fell 'case he didn't min' de Lawd."

"I knows dat, Bre'r Gab'l, but dass not de p'int. De words used is dat Adam fell, an' I believe de Bible mean jes' what it say. So what I'se tryin' to fin' out is whar he fell from, how far he fell."

Elder Gainey's face assumed an expression of deep thought, and after a few moments' pause, he replied:

"Well, Bre'r 'Lijah, I'se be'n studyin' de Scriptures for many years, but dass de fus' time I had de question put in jes' dat way 'zackly. I'll think de question ovah, an' by nex' Sunday mawnin' I hopes to be able

Continued on page 26



Continued from page 24

A blazing pine-knot supplied him with light, and cast flickering and fantastic shadows . . . "

to answer it satisfac'ry. Some o' dese deep p'ints requi'es studyin' an' prayin' ovuh. Is yuh had dat wood hauled to de chu'ch yit, Bre'r Gadson?"

"Anothuh p'int what's be'n worryin' me," continued Brother Gadson, not noticing the diversion, "is what caused de diff'e'nce 'twix' white folks an' black folks. I be'n 'flectin' dat subjic' over a long time, and axin' 'bout it; but nobody doan' seem to know nuffin' surtin' 'bout it. Some says it's de cuss o' Caanyun but I never could'n' understand bout dis here cuss o' Caanyun. I can see how de Lawd could turn anybody black jes' by cussin' 'im; 'case 'fo—I j'ined de church—dat was 'fo de wah—I use' ter cuss de overseah on ole marse's plantation awful bad—when he was'n' da—an' all de darkies on de plantation use'ter cus' 'im, an' it didn' make de leas' changes in 'is complexion. 'Peahs to me somebody must 'a done sum'in' to make black folks, 'case de Lawd is good, an' I dorn' b'lieve He made anybody black at fus!"

Brother Gabriel gazed earnestly into the fire.

"De ways of de Lawd, Bre'r Gadson, is pas' findin' out. Dat is a deep question, but I have no doubt I kin fin' a chapter in de Bible what'll throw some light on it, if it doan' 'splain it all. I will also tech on dat p'int in my sermon nex' Sunday mawnin'. Bre'r Gadson, is yuh hauled dat wood to de chu'ch yit?"

Brother 'Lijah, having relieved his mind of these weighty matters, was now in a condition to talk business. He was the "section" or sexton of Hallelujah Chapel, and attended to the fires, sweeping, and other similar duties. The matter of the wood disposed of, Brother 'Lijah discussed one of the sweet potatoes which by this time was done to a turn, and bidding the elder good-night, took his way homeward.

Whenever he had very knotty questions to discuss, Brother Gabriel went into a trance. On these occasions the elder would retire to his chamber, or to the woods, and remain for a long time engaged in prayers. These prayers were delivered aloud, and would gradually increase in energy and vociferousness until the neighbors all knew that "Bre'r Gab'l was 'ras'lin' in pr'r." When he had wrought himself up into a state of excitement bordering on frenzy he would relapse into unconsciousness. In an hour or so he would come to and have a vision, more or less marvelous to relate to his wondering auditors. Between the date of the conversation reported and the Sunday after, the elder indulged in a "rastle" which supplied the material of his great sermon.

II

The next Sabbath dawned fair and beautiful. The great blue vault stretched far above, as clear and soft as a Venetian sky. Along the country roads, bordered with fields of yellowing corn and snowy cotton, the congregation streamed from all directions. It was a big day. There were several candidates for baptism. After the baptism it was the intention of the church to start a revival. There was also a collection to be taken up for the benefit of the preacher. With all these incentives to effort, Bre'r Gabriel was anxious to do his best.

The services did not begin until half-past eleven. The appointed hour

was an hour earlier, but the colored people in their new-found freedom were like the sturdy Saxons of long ago, who, Blackstone tells us, "held it beneath the condition of a freeman to arrive or do anything at the appointed time." Bre'r 'Lijah had circulated the information that Elder Gainey would preach on the two subjects of "Adam's Fall" and the "Origin of Races," and there was considerable curiosity to hear the sermon—especially that part of it which related to the latter subject.

As the weather was fine and the church small, the services were held in the open air, under a temporary shelter of pine boughs. The pulpit and benches were brought out, and supplementary seats were extemporized by laying pine slabs across logs of wood. While the congregation was gathering, Brother 'Lijah led those present in a new song of his own composition, sung to a simple and not unpleasing melody. The song was a running commentary on the lives and virtues of "Ole Moses," "Ole David," and other Old Testament characters, and was sung by 'Lijah as a solo, the music-loving audience soon catching the swing of the rather rollicking chorus and joining in heartily.

The regular service began when Elder Gainey ascended the pulpit and gave out the opening hymn. This hymn was sung by the choir, which was composed of young people, equipped with large, yellow-covered notebooks, having the music printed in character notes. The choir sang with the spirit, though their understanding of the tune (an old-fashioned fugue) was occasionally open to doubt.

Then following the opening prayer, an appeal to the Deity by a gifted brother, whose effusion equalled in comprehensiveness the Morning Prayer in the Episcopal service. It almost equalled the Morning Prayer in length, must have been tiresome to the congregation, who were all devoutly kneeling. Several indiscreet sisters encouraged the orator by groans and exclamations, and under this stimulus it seemed hard to say when he would stop. He might have gone on and on forever, like the Wandering Jew or the Phantom Ship, had not Brother Gabriel, mindful of the other services, and watching his chance, at last brought the prayer to a close by interjecting a sonorous "Amen" when the eloquent and perspiring orator paused to breathe.

Then followed the second hymn, lined out by the preacher, and led by Brother 'Lijah who always acted as precentor. The hymn concluded, Elder Gainey stood up behind the pulpit, carefully adjusted his spectacles, poured out a glass of water from the pitcher which graced the stand, opened the Bible at random, took out his handkerchief—a large square of snowy linen—sonorously blew his nose in a dignified manner, placed the handkerchief under one side of the Bible and announced his text—a familiar passage from the Book of Revelations—and began his sermon as follows:

"I's gwine tuh preach to yuh dis mawnin', breth'n an' sistern, 'bout two mighty deep an' powerful subjec's. Las' Wednesday evenin' one o' de members o' de chu'ch axed me two questions dat sot me to sea'ch de Scripters." (Here he stated the questions substantially as propounded by Brother Gadson.) "I sea'ch de Bible day by day, but couln' fin' nothin' sartin in it. I 'cluded dey wan' no use readin' no mo'—de subjec' was too deep fur readin'. Pra'r was what was wanted. An', breth'n

*"It seemed to me, when I fell into dat trance,
I see a tall white angel comin' right down f'om hebb'en . . . "*

an' sistern, I ras'led in pra'r 'tell I fell into a trance, an' in dat trance I had a vision what made the whole thing plain as de sunlight. Dem two questions might 'peah to be mighty diffe'nt, but dat vision showed me that de two b'londed right close togeddah, dat one growed righ tout'n de yuthuh.

"It seemed to me, when I fell into dat trance, I see a tall white angel comin' right down f'om hebb'en to wha'r I wus. He had a golden harp in his han', golden slippuh's on his feet, and a crown of gold upon his head. He flewed right down 'side o' me an' says: 'Rise up, Gab'l, an' go along wid me, an' all will be made cla'r to you.' I followed de angel th'ough de aiah, ovuh de mountains an' valleys an' oceans 'tel we come to a big gyahden where all kin's o' trees an' flowuh's was growin! Den de angel says to me: 'Dis is de gyahden of Eden. Look! Den de angel lef' me an' I looked, an' see Adam an' Eve in de gyahden jes' es dey wus when de wuhld was made.

"I seen de sarpen' crawl up to Eve an' talk to her, an' den she et de apple. Bimeby Adam come 'long. Eve give Adam de apple, an' Adam did eat. Bimeby Eve seen de Lawd a comin'. 'Adam,' says Eve, 'yander come de Lawd!' Den Adam turn' pale an' begun to trumble. 'De Lawd'll be mad with us 'case we et dat apple,' says he, 'what for you make me eat dat apple, Eve?' 'You mighty big cowya'd, Adam, you done et dat apple, an' tain' no use talkin'. Yander come de Lawd, an' he look mad.' 'Less hide, Eve,' said Adam. So dey hid in the bushes. Bimeby 'long come de Lawd wid a big hick'ry in 'is han'. 'Adam, wha's you?' says he. Adam never said a word. But de Lawd knowed wha'r Adam wus, an' he come right straight towa'ds 'im.

"Adam started to run—de Lawd right aftuh 'im; Adam jumped ovuh de tree of life—de Lawd right atuh 'im; run roun' de worl'—de Lawd right aftuh 'im; swum ovuh de sea—de Lawd right aftuh 'im; jumped ovuh Jupiter—de Lawd gainin' on 'im; jumped ovuh de moon—de Lawd close behin'. When he got to de sun, he was so tired he couln' jump high 'nuff, an' de bright light blind' 'im so he couldn' see whar' he was goin', an' he fell—fell right down into the rivuh Jordan; an' befo' he could pull hisse'f out'n de mud at de bottom, de Lawd cotch'im—an' sich anuthu whiipin' de Lawd give Adam de worl' have nevuh hearn tell uv sence. An' dat 'splains, bro'r's an' sisterns, de fall of Adam.

"De yuthu p'int what was 'splained to me at de same time by de vision, was what made de diffe'nce 'twix' white folks an' black folks; an' what I larn' convince' me dat de Lawd nevuh made nobody black. 'Fac' de Lawd nevuh made nobody but Adam an' Eve—de yuthu's wus all bawn. O' co'se if Adam uh anybody else gwine' do anything to make deyse'ves black, de Lawd wan' gwine have nothin' tuh do wid it; he made 'em once, an' he nevuh do his wuk twice. So dis 'splains de diffe'nce. When Adam jump' ovuh de sun, de fiah wus so hot, it scawched 'im black as a crips, an' curled up his ha'r so he nevuh couldn't git it straight agin. An', 'cawdin' to de laws ob nachah

Jes' so de tree fall, jes' so it lie.

Jes' so de sinner jib, jes' so he die.

An so Adam nevuh turn' whit eno mo', but stayed black all de rest of 'is life. All Adam an' Eve's chillun bawn fo' de Fall wus white, an' dey wus de fo'fathers ob de white race o' people—all Adam an' Eve's chillun bawn aftuh de Fall wus black, an' dey wus de fo'fathers ob de black race of people."

The close of the sermon was followed by a ripple of excitement and

a subdued murmur, which showed the interest with which the statements of the elder had been listened to and it was not at all certain that the murmur was one of unqualified approval. One brother over in the amen corner was so deeply moved that he forgot the etiquette of the service, and startled the congregation by standing up and addressing the elder.

"Elder, did I understand you to say dat all Adam's chillun bawn befo' de Fall was white?"

"Yas, dass what de vision say."

"An' Adam libbed wid Eve aftuh de Fall?"

"Ob co'se—dey wan't nobody else to lib wid."

"Well, it kindah 'peahs to me, elder, dat unduh all de sarcumstances ob de case dem chillun bawn aftuh de Fall oughtah be'n mullatahs."

"Bre'r Isham," said the elder sternly, "I wants dis tawkin' in de chu'ch stopped. De collection will now be lifted. Bre'r Needham, set de table out. Bre'r 'Lijah, sta't a hym'e."

Charles Waddell Chesnutt (born: June 20, 1858, died: Nov. 15, 1932) was born in Cleveland, Ohio, but grew up in North Carolina after the Civil War. Chesnutt, who was light-skinned with straight hair, was well educated and became principal of a Fayetteville school. He moved to New York City and then back to Cleveland in 1883 to avoid conditions Black people suffered in the South.

His short story, "The Goophered Grapevine" was the first time the *Atlantic Monthly* accepted work from an African-American writer. In the same year, 1887, Chesnutt began his distinguished law career. Twelve years later, Chesnutt published three books: a biography of Frederick Douglass, *The Conjure Woman* and *The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color Line*. The last of his three novels was *The Colonel's Dream*, published in 1905, the year he stopped writing.

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Short story complete on these two pages.

IT'S A JOKE

By Glen M. Rinehart

Jerry, Thomas and Moses were best friends. They grew up in Tennessee, three country boys who prided themselves on being champions. Champion pranksters, that is. Jerry was the ring leader and enjoyed being thought of as the best joker in the whole Jug County. With his well worn overalls and always-shined brogans, straw hat and wide grin, he'd be sitting on a milk crate on a hot summer day, drinking a cold soda pop in front of Mr. Jimson's store. He looked harmless, but just about everybody in the county had been a victim of Jerry's genuis.

Jerry was always the first of the trio to come up with a fresh idea. The way he carried on sometimes made folks think that some "roots" had been worked on him. Now, most black folks down in them parts knew about that ol' black magic, and most of the folks in Jug County were aware of the rumor that was floating around. It was spoken in whispers that Jerry had mistakenly scared the hoots out of Miss Jamie. Scared her so bad, she let go on herself! She got real mad about that. Everybody knew Miss Jamie worked roots real good. The last person that riled Miss Jamie was Bessie, and although Bessie was a young, good-looking, smart girl—and could cook good too—she hadn't had a boy in pretty near three years. Folks knew it was because of Miss Jamie, and if they didn't know it, most of 'em believed it.

Word was that Miss Jamie had worked roots on Jerry. Said he was gonna die laughing. Of course, Jerry didn't pay too much attention to the rumor. He had heard them before. When he did give it some serious thought, it was too late to correct the matter.

You see, Jerry had told one of the girls that he was seein' that he would drop by her one day. And that's exactly what he did. He dropped right next to her from the roof of Anderson's Hardware. Jerry was laughin' right up to the moment he hit hard ground. And, it would have been real funny, except that his cushion of tractor tire inner tubes had acquired a slow leak.

Thomas and Moses didn't understand how the tubes had acquired a slow leak, and it never occurred to either of

It was the front row of folks that went quiet first. Mouths hung open. Hand fans stopped fanning.

them that Miss Jamie had anything to do with it.

The doctor said he should've died instantly. He lived for two days but never gained consciousness. Thomas and Moses were by his side to the end. They were satisfied when Jerry was able to muster up a smile. Somewhere he must have learned that the hereafter is a big barrel of laughs too.

Jerry had no relatives closer than a sixth cousin, so Thomas and Moses made the funeral arrangements at Mr. Judds Funeral parlor. Now, it was customary in Jug County that when someone passes the next of kin or closest friends threw a party. Jerry was quite popular since he had scared the wits out of so many people and Thomas and Moses had no qualms about throwing a party for him. In fact, it was at the party the night before the wake and funeral that Thomas got

his idea.

"Moe, we gotta make this county remember Jerry. We gotta give him one last laugh," Thomas said between sobs and gulps of corn whiskey, "I been thinking that Jerry sho' would love it if he could scare the hell out of a whole parlor full of folks!"

"So, what you got in mind, Thomas?" Moses asked in between his sobs and gulps of whiskey. Thomas thought for a few minutes.

"I got it! I got it!" He let out his squeaky laugh and went into a huddle with Moses. Somebody turned up the music. Everyone was having a good time in honor of Jerry. Later that night Thomas and Moses crept over to the funeral parlor. They had to prepare Jerry for his grand finale.

It was hot on the day of the wake and funeral. Mr. Judd accused the sun of being hot enough to fry an egg on the concrete steps of his parlor. It was hot. But, it didn't stop folks from coming to pay their last respects to Jerry. By the time the good Reverend Hickombottom took to the lectern, the parlor was packed. Jerry had scared the hell out of a lot of folks. All the seats were taken except for one empty seat in the front row, between Thomas and Moses.

Now, Reverend Hickombottom was a good ol' preacher. It didn't take long before he had the folks amenin',

hallaluyahin', thankin' Jesus and praisin' the Lord. It was hot! The folks were hot, and the good Reverend Hickombottom got them hotter. Thomas and Moses were right up front, hoopin' and hollerin' the loudest.

"Too bad ain't no way he can know that he's the star of this show," Moses thought as he looked at the open casket. Jerry still had the smile on his face, a knowing kind of smile, as if he knew what was about to happen, and was glad to be a part of it. The parlor was noisy. Reverend Hickombottom had emotions flarin'.

"We allllll know Jerry was a gooooooool' boy. Amen! And we alllll knowwwwwwws that when the good Lord dial your number, amen, then we gots to answer that call. We gots to answer! Can I get a amen!?" The folks amened in unison. Reverend Hickombottom wiped the sweat from his forehead and kept preaching the eulogy, which turned into a lengthy sermon on how the Lord works in mysterious ways.

It was the front row of folks that went quiet first. Mouths hung open. Eyes blinked in disbelief. Hand fans stopped fanning. Reverend Hickombottom got suspicious when he finally noticed there was no sound in the parlor but his own voice. Everyone was frozen into a (deadahead) stare. The good Reverend's eyes rolled toward the casket, and for a few seconds it was so quiet that you could just about hear sweat drop. Jerry was sitting up in his casket. "Lord have Mercy!" That was all the folks needed to bring them out of shock. The Reverend was the first one out of the door! Mr. Judd was second and the rest of the folks didn't have to be told to follow.

The screamin'! The hollerin'! Folks cursin' and trippin' over each other, and asking the Lord for forgiveness. The parlor emptied in thirty seconds flat. Except for Thomas and Moses and Jerry's body. Thomas and Moses laughed so hard tears rolled down their cheeks.

"I bet you Jerry would have loved this one," Thomas said between heaves of laughter. They were still laughing as they began to pull the wires that had raised Jerry's body into a sitting position in the casket. Moses noticed that his wire had broken, then noticed something else.

"Hey, Thomas, hey, man, why you didn't tell me that you fixed it so he could turn his head and wink at us, too?"

"What you talkin' 'bout," Thomas answered as he pulled up his end of the wire. He looked up at Moses with a puzzled look on his face. That's when he heard the front door slam. Moses was gone! The parlor was empty now, except for Thomas and Jerry's body—which sat up in the casket looking directly at Thomas—winking and smiling.

Thomas thought he saw Miss Jamie lookin' in the side window of the parlor but he wasn't sure, he was moving so fast! He was sure about one thing, the loud echoing laughter he heard as he looked back over his shoulder just in time to see Jerry's body lower itself into the casket.



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EAB

COOKING UP A STORY

Review by Linda O. Thomas

Writers, Cleora Butler, Norma Jean and Carole Darden and Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, have captured the essence and flavor of the African-American spirit through recipes and stories which, blended together, show our zestful capacity for celebrating life. They have taken our oral tradition of passing down from generation to generation family histories, celebrations, childhood memories, and "down home" trips and placed them on a backdrop of time-remembered recipes and menus. However, their works are much more than compilations of cooking skills. Rather, they are testimonials of our rich past from slavery to present. These writers pay tribute to a tradition of sharing our repast (no matter how meager or splendid) in a nurturing spirit with one another. The ingredients in each set of memories fit together like the pieces of a puzzle to make up our diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences.

Readers who don't have an aptitude for cooking, but do have a "bookish appetite" will enjoy the odysseys. Their experiences touch historical events, take readers across the country and around the world and allow the reader to glimpse Afro-Americana in ways history has never portrayed us.

Encouraged by family and friends Cleora Butler completed *Cleora's Kitchen: Eight Decades of Great American Cooking* only days before her death in 1985. Her work is a

collection of memories and recipes that pay tribute to her life as cook, caterer and bakery-shop owner. Cleora delicately illustrated her work with photographs of old time kitchen gadgets. The elegant book traces Cleora's family history from the days when her great grandmother cooked on a Texas plantation to a wagon-train excursion of Black families heading to Oklahoma.

CLEORA'S CORN FRITTERS

1 cup cream-style corn
1 cup cracker crumbs
1 cup flour
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon sugar
½ cup milk
1 teaspoon baking powder
2 Eggs

Mix thoroughly. Drop spoonfuls into deep, hot fat. Brown on both sides. Drain on paper towels. Place in a low oven as fritters are fried. Serve hot with your favorite jelly or maple syrup. Serves 6.

Cleora's own cooking memories began in 1911 when she was 10. Calumet Baking Powder was just introduced and Cleora experienced her first success at making biscuits. Through the years, cooking remained an important part of family life with Cleora as she experimented and watched her mother and father participate in their own private "cook-offs." At 15, Cleora

enrolled in a cooking program at Muskogee's Manual Training High School and after graduating, cooked for wealthy oil barons. Throughout her adult life, she catered for rich Tulsa families. In the early '60s she and her husband opened a bakery that featured her famous fudge.

BAKED FUDGE

4 eggs
2 cups sugar
1 cup butter
1 cup pecans, broken in large pieces
4 heaping tablespoons cocoa
4 rounded tablespoons flour
2 teaspoons vanilla

Beat eggs well; add sugar and butter and beat well again. Sift cocoa and flour together. Add broken pecan meats. Fold into sugar, butter and egg mixture. Add vanilla. Pour in 9x12x3 inch Pyrex dish or tin pan. Set pan in a pan of hot water (enough to come ½ to 1 inch up on sides of pan). Bake in a 325 degree oven for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Fudge will have the consistency of firm custard and will be crusty on top. Serve with a dollop of whipped cream on each piece.

Cleora's book is testimony to her own professional cooking skills and a family tradition of nurturing friendships through good food.



If you ever lost a family recipe or tradition with the passing of a loved one, you'll especially appreciate what Norma Jean and Carole Darden accomplished with *Spoonbread and Strawberry Wine*. Reflecting on the family gatherings and celebrations of their youth, the Dardens realized a valued legacy could be lost. Traveling for seven years between Virginia, North Carolina, Alabama, Delaware and Ohio, they recorded recipes they had tasted at picnics, weddings, and funerals.

Their history begins right after slavery with Great grandfather Darden, a blacksmith, shop owner, jack of all trades and skillful wine maker. Papa Darden's story is followed by family members who were funeral home owners, doctors, pharmacists, and drugstore owners and whose lives were influenced by Reconstruction, the Ku Klux Klan and segregation.

RICE AND RAISIN WINE

1 pound dark raisins
2 pounds raw rice
2½ pounds sugar
1 orange, unpeeled, sliced
1 gallon warm water
1 (¼-ounce) package active dry yeast

Place all ingredients in a crock. Stir well, cover, and set in a warm place. Stir daily for the first week and every other day for the second week. Let stand undisturbed for 2 weeks. After 1 month, strain into a gallon jug. Top with fermentation locks or cork loosely. Rack (see Index) after 3 months. Sediment produced from rice frequently takes quite a while to settle, so the wine may have to be racked again. Have patience and bottle only when crystal clear. Age for at least 1 year, preferably 2.

Yield: Approximately 1 gallon.

MORE BRUNCH FAVORITES FROM AUNT LIZZIE'S KITCHEN

SWEET MILK GRIDDLE CAKES

3 cups all-purpose flour
3 teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
¼ cup sugar
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
3 eggs
2 cups milk
3 tablespoons melted butter

Sift flour, measure 3 cups, then sift 3 times together with the baking powder, salt, sugar, and cinnamon. Beat eggs, add milk, and pour



Sandra Ford

slowly into the dry ingredients. Beat thoroughly and add butter. Drop by spoonfuls onto a lightly greased hot griddle. When puffed full of bubbles and cooked on edges, turn and cook on other side.

Yield: 24 small or 12 large griddle cakes.



After reading *Vibration Cooking or the Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl* you will never hail a cab in New York or eat gumbo (okra) without thinking about Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor. Vertamae cooks without measuring her ingredients. Feeling and spirit are the main guides for both cooking and her zany life. Though her roots are in South Carolina where she was born a rice-eating geechee girl, Vertamae cooks up a storm of friends and frenzy anywhere from Paris to Cuba.

Once you read about Vertamae's great grandfather who bought his freedom from his master and then burned his "free pass" for love, you'll understand where she gets her free-wheeling spirit. To Vertamae food is everything and everything is food. Even her politics get in the act as she whips up Castro Con Pollo, in recognition of Castro's visit to Harlem in the '60s.

CASTRO CON POLLO

Cut up the chicken in very small pieces. Season with salt and pepper and garlic and brown in olive oil. When brown add fresh parsley (chopped) and rice and chicken broth. Cover and cook slowly until the rice is cooked but not broken open. Adjust seasoning, add capers and olives.

In her introduction, Vertamae points out that too few cookbooks by African-Americans highlight our contributions to the culinary arts. Fortunately, Cleora, the Dardens and Vertamae dipped into our kitchens and our history to serve up delicious reasons to celebrate the traditions and determination that have brought Black people this far.



"Soup"

I like my soup
Thick enough to scoop,
All viscous and green
With lean, red meat
And fat lima beans.
I like it steaming,
Piping hot—
A sweet healthy mixture
Straight from the old
Black pot.

William L. Brooks
Bronx, New York



Joe Turner's Come and Gone

by August Wilson

REVIEW
BY ROB PENNY

Saturday evening, March 26, at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, I melted into the smoky skies of Pittsburgh's Hill District in 1911.

"You lookin' for a woman. I'm looking for a Shiny Man." These are catch words in *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*... August Wilson's third drama on Broadway since *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* strutted her charms and *Fences* snatched a Pulitzer. *Joe Turner* mingles African retentions with Black American spirituality. The worlds revealed in this cut-away rooming house spark exhilarating and insightful revelations.

When Herald Loomis enters wearing a long, black coat that he never takes off, even though it is summer, I was hypnotized by this black archetype. The actor's (Delroy Lindo) inner fire and outward lightning, his posture, gestures and vocal inflections had the same effect as if the hallowed essence of Horus, Shango or Jesus stood before me. And Loomis is not August's only incarnation.

In Seth Holly, the pragmatic owner of the boarding house, I saw the Egyptian deity, Seth, as well as Ogun from the sub-Sahara. And, like those

Gods, this character fights for himself and for the black community. Frustrated by denied opportunities, Seth says to his wife, "...if I could get the money to get the tools and supplies, I could go out there and get me four or five fellows and teach them how to make pots and pans. Set up a little school here."

A pivotal character is Bynum Walker. Bynum is a superstitious gent who practices—to Seth's disgust—that "old mumbo jumbo" and "heebie-jeebie stuff." Bynum, who uses his craft to bind folks together, seeks "the shiny man" . . . the "One

Bynum Walker (seated)
talks about his
"shiny man."



Photography by Joan Marcus



Herald Loomis' long lost wife greets Bertha, Seth's wife.

Who Goes Before and Shows the Way." Bynum also listens for a song in people, and says to Herald Loomis, "My daddy taught me that...a man forget his song, he got to go off in search of it. That's how I can tell you're one of Joe Turner's niggers. Because you done forgot how to sing your song."

A powerful scene ends Act I when terms like "shiny man," "bones in the ocean," "Bynum," "Herald," and "Loomis" are tied together. After the boarders finish their Sunday dinner, Jeremy (a musician from North Carolina) drums on the table. This begins a communion dance recreating the "possessions" associated with Dahomenians, Haiti Vodun, and African North American Sanctified, Pentecostal and Holy Churches.

Angered, Loomis says, "You all sitting up here singing about the Holy Ghost... You think the Holy Ghost coming... what he gonna do, huh? He gonna come with tongues of fire to burn up your wooly heads?"

This leads the stunned residents into Loomis' compelling vision of "bones rising up and walking across the water."

On one level, the scene speaks of our African consciousness calling for the flesh that was stripped away. In a more universal sense, it invokes the need to seek an untainted nature so that we can stand—rather than flounder—in this difficult world.

August Wilson's dialectics and artistry are informed by a reaffirmation of African-Extended history and culture. August says that when Euro-Greco-Romo-North American sensibilities in the forms of cultural aggression and imperialism are raised above our own, our yebo, our song even, is lost. Listen to Brownie McGee when he sings, "...the Blues had a baby/and everyone's calling it rock and roll..." But Herald Loomis, Seth and, of course, Bynum [a folk pronunciation of Wilson's grandfather's real name which was Barnum] shine as African personali-

ties because they continue to work their mojos.

August's personal and social history merges with his passion for revolutionary change and spiritual liberation to make *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* so big that it actually walks on water.



Rob Penny is co-founder, with August Wilson, of the Kuntu Writer's Workshop and the Kuntu Repertory Theatre at the University of Pittsburgh.



Shuckin' and Jivin'

(FOLKLORE FROM CONTEMPORARY BLACK AMERICANS
DARYL CUMBER DANCE
INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS)

REVIEW
BY MICHAEL WHITELY

IN THE BEGINNING

They say that, in the beginning of time, God was getting the races together, and He told the people, He say, "Now . . ." (he was telling them what to do, you know—couldn't hear so good). He say, "yaw! git to the right." They got white, you know.

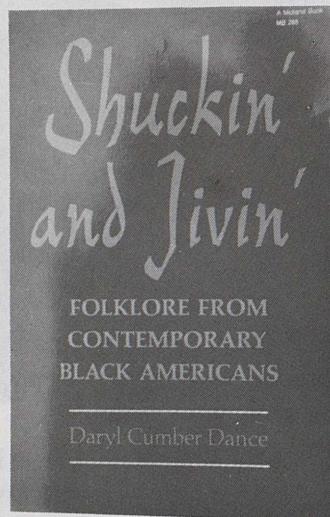
He say, "yaw! stand aroun', stand aroun', git aroun'!" They got brown, you know.

And (He said), "yaw!, git back!" And they got black.

Sound familiar? No? . . . well maybe you've heard the one about Gabriels' Bugle, or All Those Pencils; or maybe you've heard tales about Miss Lucy Neal or John Henry or Dolemite. They are just a few of the hundreds of Black folktales you'll find in *Shuckin' and Jivin': Folklore From Contemporary Black Americans*, by Daryl Cumber Dance.

The stories in the book range from a couple of lines in length to a couple of pages; many are funny, others are serious, but all take their place in the oral tradition of Black Americans. A tradition Dance claims as "probably unmatched and certainly not surpassed by that of any other group in America."

In the introduction to *Shuckin' and Jivin'* . . . Dance describes her goal as honestly presenting "folklore as it exists among Black Virginians and among Black Americans generally." To pursue the goal, she went across Virginia with tape recorder and notebook in hand. She visited senior citizen centers and prisons. She talked to people on the job and at home; recording the stories people heard growing up, from parents, grandparents, or peers. The kinds of stories Black folks tell when they're sittin' around shuckin' and jivin'.



The 565 tales, jokes, stories and snippets of black folklore are arranged in 16 chapters grouped around themes. Some of the chapters recount tales of religion, ethnic jokes, animal tales, self-degrading tales, tales about white women and Black men, risque tales, tales about outsmarting whitey, and others. From topics like these, it is clear that we are not dealing with "quaint, darling, and delightful folktales perpetuated by some folklorists," (whom Dance suggests should be called "fake-lorists").

Chapter 11 contains tales of people who endured unendurable situations and transformed them into a story. In this chapter, Dance tells a tale of her own about a moment of insight while recording a group of elderly men who were telling the tale called: "Let The Wheelers Roll"

"They had what you call those rooters-had two mules- go up there and tear the ground up and the other fellows up there had what they call a wheeler—it was more of a scoop with two wheels on it.

And they hook four mules there and scoop up in order to get that dirt up and they unhook these mules, 'n' course they had

laborers down there to lift up the dirt and carry it up the hill where they gon' dump it. One cold day, you know, said they out there loadin' wheelers and like that, and say, and they slowed down, and the boss man say, [nastily] "Hey, what's wrong with them wheelers up there? Let them wheelers roll!"

Say the fellow say, [pleadingly] "Boss Man, Boss Man, my feet is cold."

He say, "Damn your feet, let the wheelers roll!"

Dance says the men laughed at the end of the anecdote, then writes, "I watched their brows slowly wrinkle and their eyes dim with painful memories . . . Tears began to well in my eyes, but I was snatched from my sentimental mood when one of them repeated, 'What that boss man say? Let them wheelers roll!' And we all laughed heartily again."

Many of the stories in *Shuckin' and Jivin'* are bittersweet. Others are laugh-out-loud funny, while others are not funny at all. A large section of tales are risque, even obscene. Definitely not for children.

Daryl Cumber Dance has done a tremendous job. For the casual reader, *Shuckin' and Jivin'* provides lots of funny and thought-provoking material, well organized for dipping and skipping. For the researcher or the curious, she provides chapter commentaries and careful annotation that gives background on how each folktale made its way into the collection.

For some, reading this book may be like holding up a mirror; not always the most pleasant sight. For others it may be more like looking through a window at a place you have heard about but are not quite sure you want to visit. But that's a small price to pay for a glimpse into the "spirit of Black Americans."

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Minstrel Man

They are used to being entertained by us.

*We wake to the sounds of sunrise
dripping slowly over a horizon,
hair rolled into sleepy little balls,
skin to be bronzed yet another color
by the afternoon sun.*

*Sweet rhythms surround us all day
so we move in 4/4 time.*

*I paint in colors and faces.
And we dance and dance. Until it is
time to sing. Then we sing.*

*Our souls, lily white copies of another,
sculpted into shape after years of the fire,
reveal whole spirits somewhere near Nirvana.
Finally, our hearts are complete. We
know who the dove really is.*

by Yvette R. Murray
Charleston, South Carolina



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Uncle Remus His Songs & His Sayings

REVIEW
BY KAREN M. HOWARD

I've heard so many reasons why Black Americans should not read the Uncle Remus stories. Some feel that they demean us because the stories give the impression that slavery was a "good" time. The Uncle Remus stories were supposed to depict a happy slave, one that white people could embrace without feeling guilty about slavery.

Some shun Uncle Remus because he was an ex-slave who seemed to love white folks and who would dance and sing for the enjoyment of white children while disregarding the degrading effect slavery had on our people.

Joel Harris Chandler, the author of *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings*, had another motive for creating the fictitious Uncle Remus. Mr. Chandler, a white man, was born to a single-parent family in 1848 in Eatonton, Georgia. As a teenager he went to the Turnwold Plantation to learn the printing trade. It was at Turnwold that he met four slave storytellers. Mr. Chandler took the characters of these four, real men and created Uncle Remus.

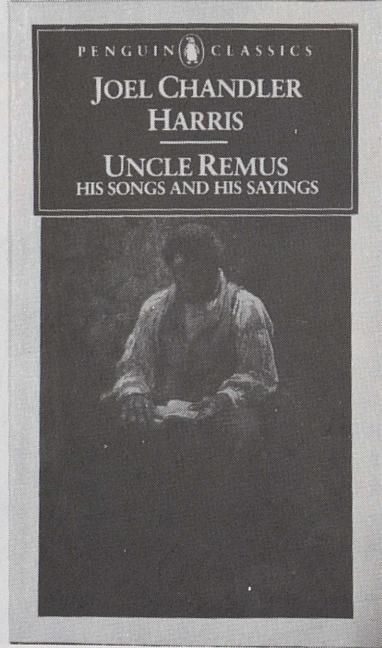
Robert Hemenway, who wrote *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography*, provides an excellent introduction that shows how Joel

Harris Chandler compiled the Remus stories. Mr. Hemenway notes that Harris was pathologically shy and did not read or tell the Uncle Remus stories in public. In fact he didn't even share them with his own children.

Mr. Hemenway states, "The Brer Rabbit tales teach each generation anew the nature of the slave's universe. Telling tales was a means of acculturation, a technique of adaptation to the environment of bondage." The African slave had to believe in some form of revolution and the Brer Rabbit tales provided them with that hope. Brer Rabbit who was witty and extremely intelligent always outwitted his captors. It's interesting though that folklorist Florence Baer traced many of the animal tales in *Sayings and Songs* to Africa.

If *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings* is read from the mind set that we are sons and daughters of slaves who were stripped of dignity and paraded in front of our oppressors as happy, do-what-you-want-to-me Negros, the book and the Uncle Remus character with his old Negro dialect may be offensive.

Actually, this book allows us to better appreciate how our forefathers overcame the most deplorable time of American history through the art of storytelling. Let's share the African animal stories that were preserved by our slave mothers and fathers with our children.



I hope the time has come when we can release ourselves from slave mentality and touch Africa where we all are free.

Karen M. Howard is a teacher at the Woolsair Gifted Center, Pittsburgh Public Schools.

BEFORE I DIE

*When I close my eyes
I want to go
to the spirit in the dark,
to the bridge over troubled waters,
to amazing grace.*

*Before I die
I want to sing "Save Me,"
the way Aretha cries.*

*When I die
I want to go where
Aretha goes
when she closes
her eyes
and sings.*

by Amelia Feathers
Lamar University
Orange, Texas

“Liza Lou and Yeller Belly Swamp”

BY MERCER MAYER

REVIEW

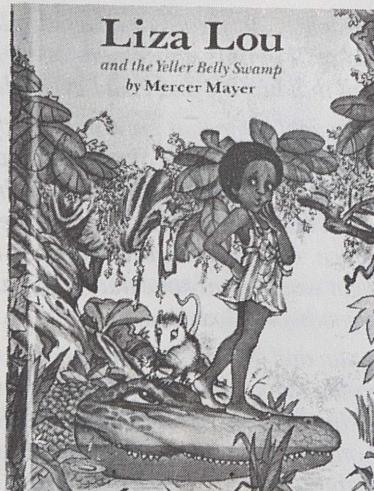
BY YOLANDE CAMPBELL

Liza Lou and the Yeller Belly Swamp is one of the most beautiful and delightful books on the market today about a Black child. *Liza Lou* has all the characters and places a child would love to live and play in.

Liza Lou is a little girl living in the back wood swamps with her mother. On one of her daily errands she encounters “a good-for-nothing swamp haunt” who likes the sweet potatoes Liza Lou is carrying to her Gramma’s house. Liza Lou uses her quick wit to trick the “swamp haunt” into running the errand for her, and once he gets there, a big surprise is waiting for him.

Liza’s other adventures include tricking “Miss Swamp Witch” into boiling and cleaning her Auntie Jane’s Sunday go-to-meeting finery, and evading the “slithery gobbligook” living under the swamp bridge. He likes to dine on any person or thing that crosses the bridge. Well, Liza Lou has a few words for him the day she crosses.

And then there’s the sly swamp devil. He lives at the bottom of the well, and if ever he catches anyone passing by, he jumps inside their ear and steals their soul away.



These characters remind you of all the monsters, villains and creepy things you hear about when growing up, and make you wonder how Liza Lou manages to live and survive with them.

She has talents beyond her years and poles around the swamp as easily as we walked to school. But Liza enjoys her life, and has the wisdom of her family to help her through each adventure. She uses her imagination and thinks on her feet. What grabs your heart is her catchy phrases, like:

*“One, two, three, four,
Five on the double.
If you mess around me,
It’s a mess of trouble.”*

Liza Lou is the wisdom of the old coming out in the young. All the devils, gobbligooks, witches, and haunts in Yeller Belly Swamp have not been seen or heard of since meeting her. And they haven’t been missed either.

Yolande Campbell is the Business Manager for the Homewood Brushton Informer, Pittsburgh, PA

QUIZ ANSWERS

- | | |
|-------|--------|
| A. 4 | R. 2 |
| B. 23 | S. 9 |
| C. 25 | T. 12 |
| D. 8 | U. 15 |
| E. 10 | V. 16 |
| F. 26 | W. 18 |
| G. 11 | X. 17 |
| H. 24 | Y. 19 |
| I. 3 | Z. 22 |
| J. 30 | AA. 33 |
| K. 6 | BB. 34 |
| L. 13 | CC. 14 |
| M. 5 | DD. 21 |
| N. 31 | EE. 29 |
| O. 7 | FF. 32 |
| P. 28 | GG. 20 |
| Q. 1 | HH. 27 |





POWER OF THE PLANET/ LUSTER OF THE MIND

I must have stopped twelve people tonite. Yeah... at least 12 whole human beings. Not to buy a watch I just got and needed to unload; not to "Hurry, hurry hurry, to see the hottest show in town;" not to watch the 'girlyies' wiggle on the screen or even to pay for old time nostalgia.

I must have stopped at least twelve people... to witness a universal/planetary/happening. Something perhaps obscene in the modern world of "I'm-only-concerned-for-me/bang/chop/band/die." Something of the universal order of all that has life and could ever relate to life... in any way.

I was watching the moon and had a thought. One that grew into a profound revelation the longer I watched. And I started drawing people to watch it too. Stopped cars and pulled people over like I was official. A few got out too. Stopped cars and pulled people over walking home or to their people's home and I stopped joggers too. To look at the moon. Nature doing her thing at which she is best. I was watchin the event of a breath/space. One that would not happen to the same intensity in my breath/life ever again. And the thought was the only one that would allow itself to come... to my mind... while I gazed in awe of the goodwork God does.

Since the moon is a reflection of the sun and the sun is shining where the moon is not... the moon was being sucked in on my side of the world. The other side of the planet was in sunshine till the moon started its long destined rendezvous with the sun. We were all seeing the same thing at the same time! I mean the whole planet. Everything and everyone in this breath/space was seeing the same thing at the same time! What a super powerful vibration/action/thought/event to live in.

Then I started thinking... suppose, just suppose, that all the people on the planet that cared enough to give their very best, decided to one-up Hallmark and think their very best.

Put out a very positive thought at/to/in care of/the sun/moon.

All the people that meditate and regurgitate on death and destruction and pay others to meditate on it for them could be wiped out by the energy of the positivity. The oneness of the thought. The explicit desire for the best in us... all. No holds barred.

Wipe out hunger...

Destroy the soul of hatred

Move racism to the tides and

Irreverence for the Creator to the winds.

Eclipse — over-shadow and out power — the war machines who meditate on your loss of a leg. Who meditate on your inability to see. Who gain momentum from your inactivity. Eclipse them with your mind. Transform them with your energy and thought and love of positive, life-giving things like people who love you or hold your hand. Read you the Bible or the news. Touch your heart and soul with love whether they like it or not 'cause you're lovable and they are able to love.

A very powerful thought. A super effective message/action/deed (by which you are judged) when the other half of the planet is willing the same thing... with the same process and the same energy.

I must have stopped 12 people. At least 12 people and laid this trip on them. Told them this message. Released that private thought to take wings in the minds of us that can see and know... that not to DO the thought is death — slow, deadly, sure. At least 12 people and only about 5 looked at me — in my bathrobe, too-big-shoes and unkempt hair — as if I were out of my mind... or trickin.

Hopefully a whole lot of other people stopped cars too. So maybe I didn't look so strange afterall... no real worry tho... 'cause I was marveling over the goodrichness of the universe and the natural order of love and what is and ever shall be.

As it was in the beginning... I got so hiiiiigh. A junkie couldn't touch it.

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QUIZ

- In keeping with this issue's light and loving look at the peculiarities of being Black in America, the Quiz is from Clarence Major's *Dictionary of Afro-American Slang*. Match the words with their meanings.
1. Air bags
2. Axle grease
3. Bag
4. Big Apple
5. Chump change
6. Copping Z's
7. Connigeration
8. Dinky
9. Dome
10. Earth pads
11. Fifty-eleven
12. Fry
13. Gig
14. High yaller
15. Homeboy
16. Idea pot
17. John Henry
18. Keep on keeping on
19. Kicks
20. Leg sacks
21. Lip
22. Make tracks
23. Moo juice
24. Nitty-gritty
25. Ofay
26. Oofus
27. Pulleys
28. Quiet as it's kept
29. Same ol' same ol'
30. Sweet tooth
31. Uppity
32. Wow! (1950's-70's)
33. Yo-yo
34. Zazzle
- _____ A. any big northern city but especially New York, term originated among widely traveled jazzmen
_____ B. cow's milk
_____ C. white man (foe in Pig Latin)
_____ D. poor quality
_____ E. feet or shoes
_____ F. a dumb, awkward person
_____ G. a profuse or uncountable quantity
_____ H. unvarnished facts; underbelly of a situation; core; the basics
_____ I. one's disposition, mood, behavior, lifestyle, vocation, hobby, interests
_____ J. having a craving for sweets
_____ K. sleeping
_____ L. a job (originally a jazzman's job)
_____ M. a small amount of money
_____ N. arrogant; sophisticated
_____ O. the love of black people for each other, the affection and interest in interrelation between "Nigrates" (from Robert H. DeCoy's *The Nigger Bible*)
_____ P. an expression used prior to revealing what is assumed to be a secret
_____ Q. human lungs
_____ R. any stiff pomade for the hair
_____ S. human head
_____ T. to straighten (with a hot comb) nappy hair
_____ U. person from one's home town (Southern)
_____ V. the human skull, one's mind
_____ W. perseverance
_____ X. a hard-working black man; a black man with courage and endurance in the face of inhuman work.
_____ Y. one's pleasure; shoes; also, that which is laughable
_____ Z. to leave; to run; to go away in a hurry
_____ AA. a dumb person, victim of routine; someone who is manipulated.
_____ BB. sexual desire or exaggerated sensuousness.
_____ CC. light-skinned Afro-American, especially female
_____ DD. a defense lawyer; talking back in self-defense
_____ EE. a routine thing or situation
_____ FF. an expression of delightful surprise or simple astonishment
_____ GG. socks
_____ HH. suspenders

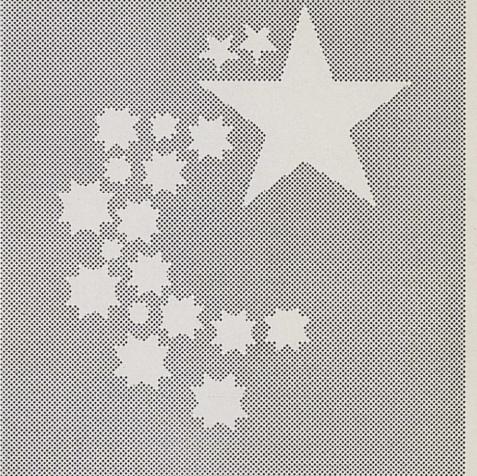
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ANSWERS ON PAGE 37

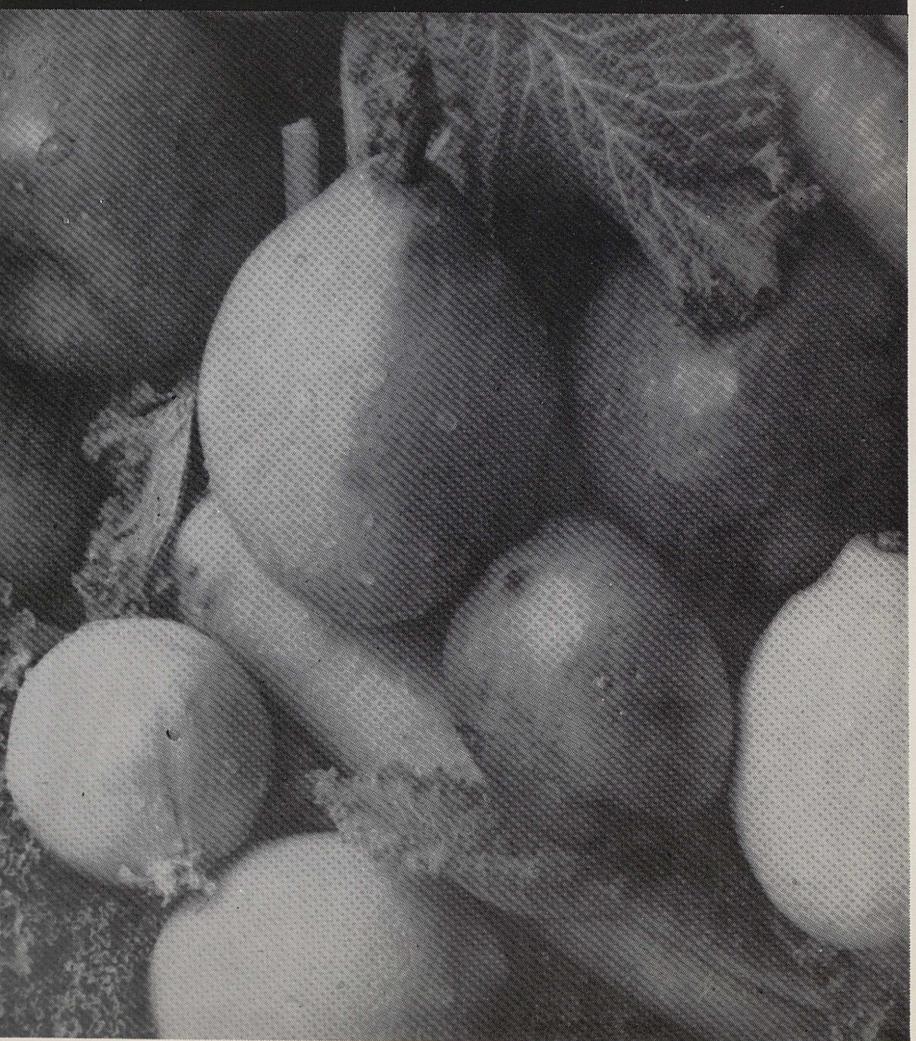


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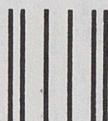
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JUSTICE

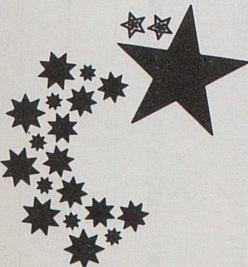
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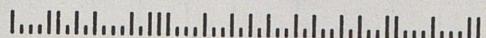
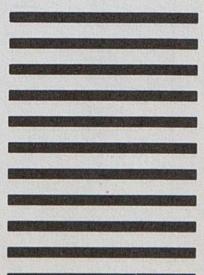
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