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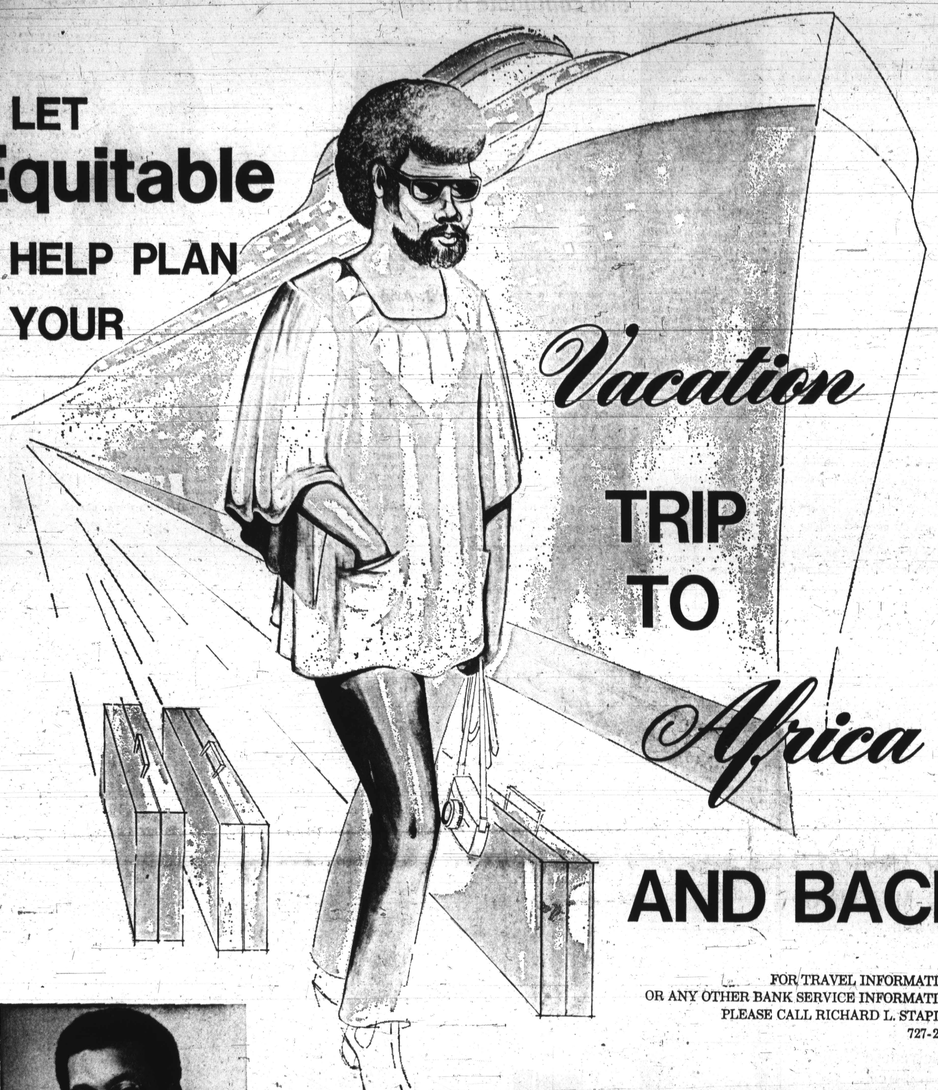

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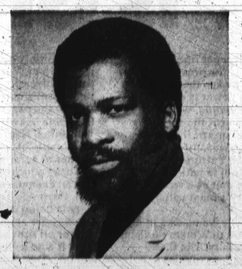

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Flower Mart 1970...

DELIGHTED with the puppet show were the grade schoolers (LEFT PANEL) including fascinated young man and three little girls in pretty spring frocks. (CENTER PANEL) Mrs. Edith Booker with her flower parasol and her son, Onam. (RIGHT PANEL) Mrs. Lillian Washington holds treasured potted plants she purchased to make her garden bright all summer.

Peaceful Show Turns Into 'Miniature Riot' 'Clear The Area' Order Given By Police

By ELIZABETH M. OLIVER

Everybody was there, persons of all races, creeds and ages.

Among the estimated 20,000 persons who arrived before noon were thousands of today's young people dressed as Indians and Africans and those in tank-type swim suit tops, an Eskimo in fur (with the temperature hitting 90); girls near-naked, belly buttons showing above hip-hugger slacks; modest young women in fresh spring frocks, micromini, mini and maxi.

Also present on the scene of the 58th Flower Mart on Mt. Vernon Place were grandparents with their grandbabies; parents and their youngsters in strollers and elderly ladies and gentlemen who enjoyed it all despite their "I don't know what this world is coming to attitude."

It was a beautiful day, all told nevertheless.

Somehow, nothing even in these difficult times, can change what they all came for — a carnival-like outdoor spring day among flowers old-fashioned booths sales, crab cakes, syrup-covered apples, cotton candy and homemade fudge.

The famed peppermint lemons were sold by the thousands at 25 cents each to quench the thirst.

Throughout the afternoon, the noted Rivers Chambers Orchestra had strolling musicians.

Hippies played their guitars and spasmotically staged dramatic plays mostly about peace and "no more war."

A blond preacher and his wife had a 6 ft. high display diagramming "God's plan for Peace."

* * *

An elderly lady who said she had never missed a Flower Mart sat on someone's steps eating a popsicle. Beside her was a basket of bedding plants. "Too damn expensive," she said. "But I wanted them anyhow."

Her withered feet were in faded white tennis shoes, but on her head was a sedate Easter hat from many years ago and she fanned herself with white gloves, tinged with brown from age.

From the steps at No. 16 W. Madison St. youths and young girls dressed mod fashion gave away cokes and iced tea, in plastic cups to passersby who "couldn't believe it."

An older woman gave away apples.

A tanned woman in her 50's accepted all and remarked, "Folks today are crazy, but they're nice. You've got to admit that."

Two truck drivers drinking the free iced tea offered money "to pay for the sugar at least" but were refused with smiles from a pretty long-haired girl and a handsome young man, bearded and bushed.

* * *

The only trouble was, according to Tactical Squad Lt. James Watkins, "Everybody wanted to do their own thing."

The veteran police officer was on the scene along with "top brass" from every department including Major William (Box) Harris and Capt. Dennis Mello who urged the crowd to "keep moving."

Their voices through bull horns echoed back and forth among the booths. As early as 9 a.m. it was known to them the riots would come.

The main disturbances were along the Cathedral St. side where it took mounted officers on 21 horses to clear a 4-block area.

All police divisions were represented, Riot Squad officers complete with the latest in helmets and other crowd-control equipment; plainclothes officers, Intelligence, Tactical and uniformed emergency men from every district in the city.

A paddy wagon hustled a load of juveniles off to jail. Another back-up wagon stood by along with dozens of police cars while a yellow school bus pressed into service held more young suspects under arrest.

A police officer stood by the driver's seat watching over several boys and one girl, all seated spaces apart inside the bus.

Mounted police and Riot Squad officers drove wedges into the crowd and when one youngster was apprehended, a foot patrolman hustled him off to the bus.

Police report the youth grabbed a girl's bra.

A crowd of young people of all races rushed on a book booth, scattered the volumes and tore some up.

No reason was ever learned but in the melee, a barrel of ice was overturned and the contents hurled by the fistful at the police and the crowd.

Some kids slipped on the ice and fell flat to the pavement while scores of their companions hooted and laughed.

One young man caught a spray of mace right in his mouth as he opened it in a fit of name-calling.

Horses were driven up on the sidewalk to root out screaming girls and boys from doorways and steps.

A youth who stood in the middle of Cathedral St. thumbing his nose and ears at the mounted police had to run for his life to escape being trouced.

A middle-aged bystander who had just remarked, "It's bad, but it's thrilling" had her hot dog (topped with sauerkraut) knocked from her hand as it neared her mouth.

In a split-second, the delicious, drippy sandwich for which she had paid 40 cents and waited 15 minutes in line, was gone.

"Now, ain't that a shame," she said looking down at the kraut, the dog and the bun scattered on the grass.

"Never cry over spilled milk," she said as she made her way back to the booth where the kraut simmered with pig knuckles in one pot and the dogs and rolls steamed in another.

Hippies sat on the grass pinching off whole layers of

(Continued on page 30)

UNFORTUNATE incidents arose as (Bottom) young men of all races were urged on by police. (Top) Mounted officers charged their horses into crowds of teenagers who screamed at the sight of animals. Officer with billy club poised wears riot helmet.

OFFICER SPRAYS mace (lower left corner) while helmeted Riot Squad police close in on crowd of disorderly teenagers.

Tragic Day Starts Off Nicely

By WILLARD DIXON

"Wonderful, it gets better every year. I really like it, yes, indeed. This is my second year and I have enjoyed every minute of the stay, while we are here."

Mrs. Annie Richardson, an elderly woman who purchased several flowers at the Ansual Flower Mart, Tuesday, in Mt. Vernon Square, cheerfully told the AFRO her feelings about the gala affair.

This was at mid-morning; this is prior to the large influx of high school students who took time from their classes to "dig" the flowers and the show's other attractions

Mrs. Richardson, had she remained, would have been appalled at the events which would turn the perennial flower show, into a police free-for-all.

"I ask you, did you take a picture of the black people getting arrested here today? What did they lock them up for. They locked them up for nothing. Just because there are so many people here, they are locking up black people for nothing."

* * *

This was the reaction of one angry young black student over the manner in which he said riot-squad policemen waded into crowds of students and made arrests.

One youngster was grabbed by about three or four officers, and liberally thrown to the ground where he was maced and handcuffed. A young woman, scuffling with a single officer, was grabbed indiscriminately by three others, and tossed like a sack of four, onto the steel floor of a paddy wagon.

What started it all? What turned a peaceful flower show into a miniature riot that saw hundreds of police called in to quell it? One answer may be the oppressive heat that saw temperatures - ar into the 80's, but another answer was the explosive mixture of large numbers of young blacks and young whites, as both races rubbed shoulders in the limited space of the square.

* * *

Amid shouts of "pigs" and "black power" mobs of young blacks attacked the whites, beating many of them severely. Young, "hippie-looking" whites, many of them considered to be the "radical" element in the white community and good "coalition" material, were bloodied by a tide of black anger which swept across the square, forcing whites to take refuge in the streets surrounding it.

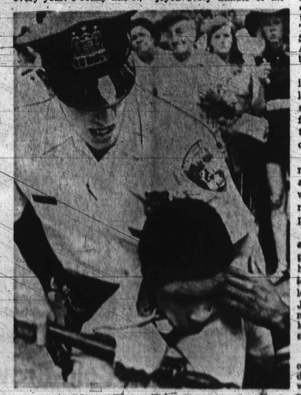
"The only reason I came down was to get rid of some of these crackers, you know," was the comment of one youngster.

"This ain't nothing but the police out here, all they think about is getting the white people out. They are not taking up for the black people. It's more white police out here, than anything else out here," was the reaction of one young lady to the actions of the police.

* * *

"The Human Relations Commission, we have got to keep it real cool, baby. We are taking badge numbers and police names," said an official of the State Human Relations Commission, who was on hand along with other commission officers, including executive director, Treadwell Phillips, to try and "cool off" the students.

Their exhorting people to "cool it" was weak in comparison to the "clear the area!" order given by the police. To enforce this edict, mace-spraying, club-swinging, riot officers, on horses and on foot, cordoned off the entire square, while making numerous arrest.



DISTRESSED at being restrained by police officer at the Flower Mart, a youth bows his head under the pressure and appears to be somewhat tearful.