Morgue serves as newspaper doorway to history, nostalgia

A newspaper morgue is probably the nearest thing to a time machine that's yet been invented.

The use of the present tense, the urgency and immediacy of the headlines, the relevancy of events, all tend to transport the reader to another time, another era, and for a brief moment he comes to know the laughter and tears, the infrequent victories and chronic failings, of his progenitors.

* * *

THE AFRO's morgue, because of the special nature of the newspaper, is even more of a time transporter.

And the unsuspecting researcher who attempts to detect the events and happenings in the 75 years of history contained in the alphabetical files, the microfilmed pages, and the numerous pictures and reference books, is liable to find himself lost in a glorious maze of history-making.

Ghosts — mere names in the substrata of conscience—come wonderfully alive before your eyes, vibrant in the act of making or becoming history, all too real in the context of the events which made their heyday.

* * *

EACH OF the alphabets is a story.

Some of them are familiar: Alexander, William Rev. (An AFRO founder), Bethune, Dr. Mary McLeod; Carver, George Washington; Douglass, Frederick; and so on. All are chronicled at the height of their careers in the newspages of the AFRO. And the glorious past of history makers still living — Anderson, Marian; Bunche, Ralph; Campanella Roy; ad infinitum.

* * *

IT IS inevitable that the AFRO morgue would contain more heroes than most other newspaper libraries.

In addition to its pages of entertainment and information, the newspaper chronicles the struggle of a people seeking democratic institutions in the world's leading democracy.

The history books of the future will record it as one of the tragic, or one of the most inspiring, stories ever told.

But not all the names in the AFRO morgue will be found in the history books. Some are just little men doing little things in a big way; others are isolated and terribly far from the side of duty to make our democracy in wartime square with its principles. I feel that to be my superior duty to the cause of democratic liberty and equality.

* * *

"I BELONG to no organization, and I act solely for myself. But I know I reflect the feeling of many thousands of my fellow Americans of colored blood who are called upon to fight for a democracy they do not share.

"I am taking my stand now. I am fully convinced that in so doing I take a position on democratic principles which are far more important to me than any penalty I may suffer.

"I have arrived at my position not lightly. I am not a man whose temper leads him to public notice. I would refrain from resisting if I could. Yet I cannot live with myself and yield the ground of principle on which I stand, and for which I am prepared to take whatever consequences come."

* * *

JONES WAS widely respected for his stand, even by those who opposed him. The editor of P.M., who argued with him for hours called him editorially . . . . a man of courage and the equal if any man I know."

The AFRO, under and editorial, "The Government's Answer to Lewis Jones is Jail (Nov. 14, 1942)." said "a jail doesn't answer logic, and Jones raises questions that ought to have logical answer," and added, "Not much can be said about it in war time, but a great deal will be said about it in the future."

* * *

DR. KENNETH CLARK, then the first colored psychologist at City College, sat in on a four-hour interview of Lewis Jones, by AFRO correspondent Vincent Tubbs, and pronounced him saner than most men.

"Jail, is the way to dispose of troublesome individuals, but the answer to lies in truth; the answer to wrong is righteousness; the answer to Fascism's challenge, we believe, is real democracy," the AFRO said.

A 1929 newspaper shows that the AFRO received a death threat against Dr. Adam Clayton Powell Sr., founder and pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church in New York, from a Baltimore evangelist.

Powell had preached a sermon on the immorality of some members of the clergy, in which he said, "The rottner the preacher the better the average congregation likes him . . ."

* * *

FREDERICK DOUGLASS, Baltimore-born author and lecturer, is recorded advocating the distribution of a pamphlet describing the condition of the colored American and his relation to American civilization to be distributed at the World Columbia Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

He asked that contributions to help finance the effort be sent to his home at Cedar Hill, Anacostia, D.C.

Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake, after a tour of the country, were reported about to embark on a tour of exclusive clubs in London, including the exclusive Metropole Club, in a September 1925 edition.

The same edition contains an article on the dancing genius of Bill Robinson . . . I don't get it from the music, I get it from my heart."

Liberian counsul urged end to educational bars

As early as 1899, the AFRO's 7th year of publication, the Rev. Ernest Lyon, general consul of the United States in Liberia, urged the end of discrimination in education.

He was speaking to the 18 graduates of the Colored High School. The Rev. Mr. Lyon, once minister of the John Wesley and Ames Methodist Churches, was quoted in part in an AFRO of June 1899.

* * *

HE SAID, "With such institutions as the Colored High School, the State need have no reason to fear the black man. If the State is wise, let it provide equal advantages for the physical as well as the mental development of the black as well as the white child."

"There should be no discrimination in the matter of education. There should be no two standards in this country. The public education of the black man, should be as thorough and complete as the education of the white man.

"Having once aroused the mental curiosity of the black man, it will not be checked. If Johns Hopkins University

(Continued on page 15)

Businesses vied for patrons through AFRO

Competition was keen among colored business men in early AFRO days as they vied to attract the patronage of the local citizenry.

One of the largest grocery stores was owned by John R. Keene, Saratoga and Courtland Sts.

His establishment was popular with lawyers, court clerks and school children as a veritable lunch room.

Barred from downtown restaurants they consumed daily, vast quantities of milk, pies, buns and cakes.

* * *

THE T. ROYE MARSHALL whose grocery was at Dolphin and Division Sts., was the grandfather of Honorable Thurgood Marshall, who was named to the U. S. Supreme Court in June.

Other grocers were W. C. Moorman, 1100 Etting St., E. L. W. Scott, Robert and Division Sts. and the Superior Grocery Store, 1015 Druid Hill Ave.

* * *

JAMES E. HERNDON and William H. Bevans, the latter a poultry dealer, had stalls in Lexington and Hollins Markets.

Edward Queen also a poultry dealer was in both Richmond and Lafayette Markets.

Harry T. Pratt was dubbed an outstanding young businessman in his young adulthood.

Best known as principal of Douglass High School, Mr. Pratt operated the Druid Laundry, first at Druid Hill Ave. and Union St.

The present location, 1634 Druid Hill Ave., was then known as Pratt's Apartment House.

* * *

UNIQUE AMONG colored business men was Capt. George Brown, owner of the steamer, "Starlight," which carried hundreds of Baltimoreans "down the bay," with the "moonlights," being very popular on warm summer evenings.

Music for dancing was provided by Dr. T. H. Kerr's Society Orchestra.

* * *

FOWLER'S PHARMACY was the largest, and pobably the most popular of the 30-odd drug stores. Located at Druid Hill Ave. and Biddle St. its specialties were chocolate sodas and sundaes. (A separate story about Baltimore drug stories appears elsewhere).

The Metropolitan Department Store, 611 N. Eutaw St. was managed by Samuel Hayward, not too distant from the Solid Rock Department Store, 917 Druid Hill Ave.

Ladies and Gents Wearing Apparel was on sale from Samuel Burton, 1214 Pennsylvania Ave.

* * *

THE ONLY 'Piano Hospital" in town was owned by Walter Pinderhughes, 1203 Druid Hill Ave.

* * *

WELL KNOWN caterers included George Bowen, James W. Hughes, Julius Johnson, Richard Macks, Charles Shipley, John R. Young, Able Monroe Burgess, E. B. Taylor, Mrs. Allen Griffith, Mrs. Emma Simms, James A. Harris, and James Dougherty.

* * *

HUGH BURKETT, realtor, was also a banker.

William L. Fitzgerald, 1206 Druid Hill Ave., a realtor who later became a City Councilman, was the first colored lawyer to pass the bar in Baltimore.

* * *

BARBERS PREFERRED to be called tonsorial artists. Their shops, which doubled as social centers for the men, were usually crowded on Saturday nights.

Among the more popular were Johnson's, 544 W. Lanvale St. John W. Jones, 1422 Jefferson St., Buckingham's Shaving and Hair Dressing Parlor, 1802 Druid Hill Ave., W. A. Jones, 1417 Pennsylvania Ave., Sanders, Druid Hill Ave. and Hoffman St. and James T. Ray, 1313 Presstman St.

* * *

WILLIAM JENKINS, 513 Myrtle Ave. was the first colored business man on that street.

* * *

A MEETING place for sportsmen was the Goldfield Hotel, Lexington and Colvin Sts., owned by a former prize fighter, Joe Gans.

Top colored Democrat was Tom Smith, and his hotel 435 Druid Hill Ave., drew the local politicians.

Out-of-town guests also found rooms at The Myrtle Accommodation, 502 W. Biddle St., The McClain, 1206 Druid Hill Ave., Thomas's 508-510 Myrtle Ave. and Adams' 22 Calvert St., Annapolis, Md.

* * *

BEAUTICIANS, UNDERTAKERS, . . . Insurance men, and moving men all helped make up the colord business world, with Druid Hill and Pennsylvania Aves. being the center of activities.

75 YEARS YOUNG — These smiling faces belong to members of the Israel Baptist Church Senior Choir No. 1, which is also celebrating its 75th birthday. Israel, pastored by the Rev. E. D. Meade (left) marked its 75th year last August. From the pastor's left (front row) are Mesdames Sallie Butler, Dorothy Howard, Vashti Jackson, Mary Taylor, Iva Sligh, and Julia Harris. Second row: Deacon Eugene Tyson, Mesdames Isabelle Elam, Willie Mae Cherry, Alease Knight, Helen Johnson, Florence McCall, and Clestine Redmond. Third row: Mesdames Essie Person, Mable Jackson, Goldie Coleman, Eva Crowell, Roberta Lipscombe, Martha Taylor, and Ora Alexander. Fourth row: Mrs. Elizabeth Jackson, Glenn Curtis, Mrs. Adelaide Seymour, and William Johnson.

Israel Baptist famed choir marks 75th

Also marking its 75th Diamond Anniversary this year is the Senior Choir of Israel Baptist Church organized in 1892 under the leadership of the late pastor, the Rev. James Reed.

Israel Baptist Church, Preston and Chester Sts., with Dr. Edmond D. Meade present pastor, is one of Baltimore's leading churches.

The Senior Choir president is Mrs. Sallie Butler. Mrs. Goldie Coleman is director.

The Diamond birthday celebration officially began Sunday June 11 with 8 p.m. services, the Rev. Mr. Meade delivering the anniversary sermon.

Others on the program were Mrs. Mable Jackson, presiding, Eugene Tyson and Mesdames Helen A. Johnson, Willie Mae Cherry, Adelaide Seymore, Julia Harris, Alease Knight, Pearl Johnson and Mary Coleman.

Music was by the Children's Choir.

* * *

THE TUESDAY June 13, 8 p.m. song program was announced by Mrs. Eva Crowell and included as host choirs, the Jubilee Chorus, Male Chorus, Senior Choir No. 2 and Young Adult Choir.

Mrs. Isabelle Elam gave the welcome address, the Rev. Mr. Meade, Mrs. Mary Taylor, Mrs. Carrie Hall of Mt. Calvary Star Baptist Church, Mrs. Vashti Jackson and Mrs. Sallie Butler also spoke.

Mrs. Celestine Redman presided, program, Mesdames Elizabeth Jackson, Lula Taylor, Sallie Butler, Adelaide Seymore, Goldie Coleman, chairman.

HIGHLIGHTING the celebration of the group's birthday, however, was a banquet given at the church on June 19.

At the colorful and momentous occasion, the famed 38-member Baltimore group was presented in a body and cited for its many accomplishments through the years.

Eugene Tyson served as toastmaster. The Rev. Mr. Meade said grace and Mrs. Elizabeth Jackson brought greetings.

Special citations were given Mrs. Odessa Carroll, soprano, by Mrs. Annie Claiborne, and Mrs. Mary Matthews by Mrs. Celestine Redman. The Rev. Emerson T. Wright presented the choir. Mrs. Matthews was director 38 years, from 1929 to 1958.

The Rev. John H. Clark, guest speaker, was presented by the Rev. Norman Reed. Mrs. Butler and the Rev. Mr. Meade also spoke.

Music was by the Hall Sisters trio and Mrs. Isabel Tay-

(Continued on page 15)

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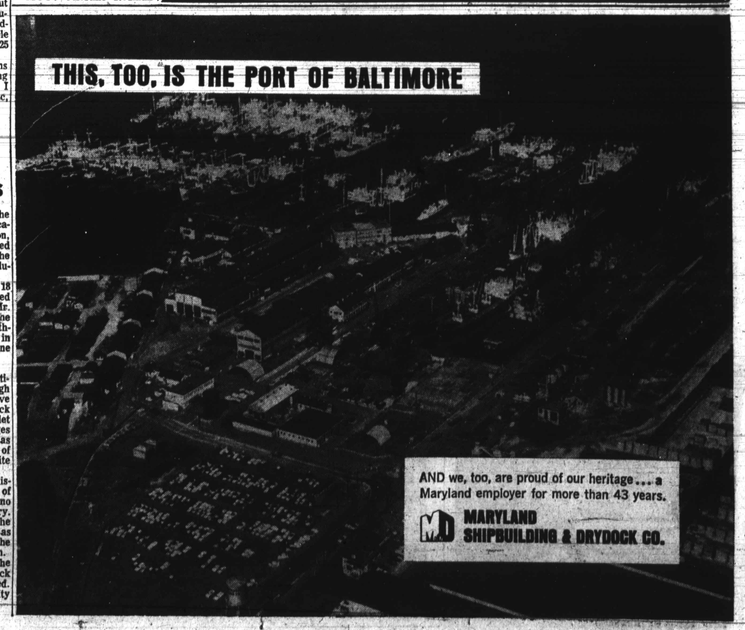

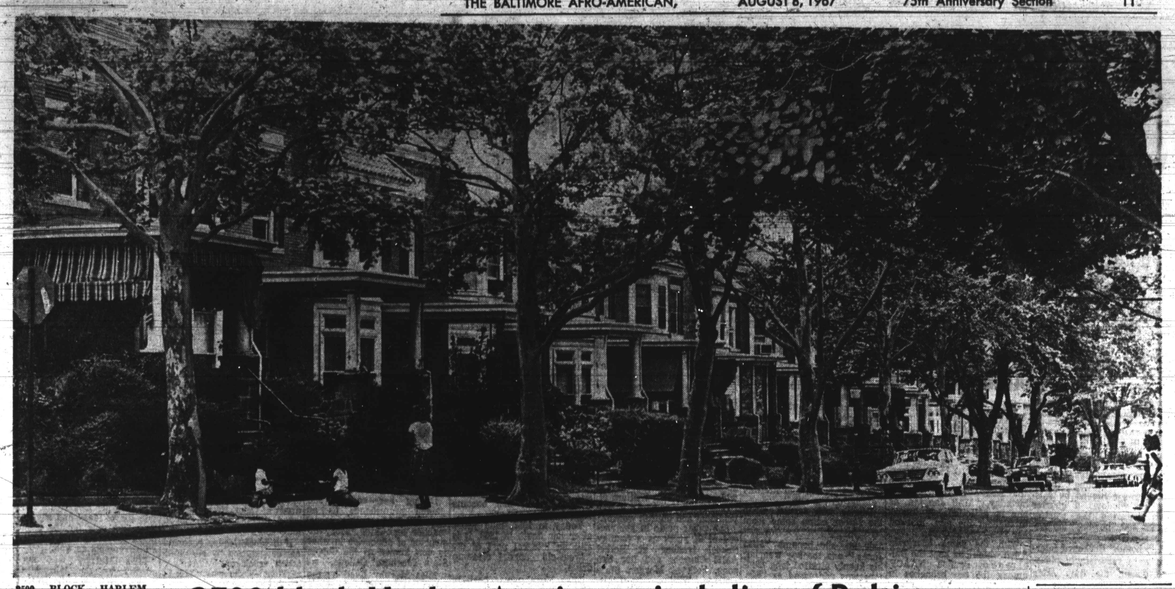

2500 block Harlem Ave. is a typical slice of Baltimore

2500 BLOCK HARLEM AVE. is typical of hundreds of inner city residential blocks in 1967. It has more trees than many others and being off the main traffic arteries and without large shopping outlets is quieter. Its row houses look more like individual homes than the straight-up type to be found in many sections but there are sundry other streets quite like this block. A high percentage of the residents are faithful AFRO readers.

* * *

Douglass High School, located in a building on Holiday St., was opened in 1883. In 1887 it was moved to Saratoga St., and in 1901 named the Colored High School.

The 2500 block of Harlem Ave. is a microcosm of middle-class Baltimore, a slice of the people who reflect the values and aspirations that made "Crab City" a big name in early years of the country's history, and that contributes to its present posture.

A visit to the neighborhood on a late summer afternoon caught the block in a typical setting. The tall, majestic greystone Union Memorial Church dominates the northeast corner of Harlem and Warwick Aves.

The row homes are separated from the treelined streets by carefully tended shrubbery and small neatly trimmed plots of lawn.

Sit quietly for a moment and you can hear birds singing accompaniment to a leafy chord played by a slight but persistent breeze.

The laughter of skating children at the east end of the block punctuates the symphony, blending the talents of humanity with what would otherwise be nature's own production.

* * *

STANDING IN the doorway of the basement of the church, Charles L. Johnson, short white hair topping a lean, wiry figure, turned and looked down the street.

"I'd say about half of the people in the block come or belong to Union Memorial," he said. "It's a good neighborhood church — quiet, no bars close by. Sometimes the teenagers raise a little cain but otherwise it's a good place for a church."

Mr. Johnson, 67, has been building superintendent of Union Memorial since it located there in 1953. The million dollar building was formerly owned by the white Harlem Park Methodist Church.

He lives at 1503 N. Hilton, but is at the church from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day, "and a little later on special occasions."

The sound of choral music coming from inside the church indicated that his presence there at this hour was the senior choir's rehearsal.

* * *

THE SOUND of a police siren wailing in the distance, seemed remote and removed from the serenity of the neighborhood.

A number of the residents were sitting on front porches, enjoying relief from temperatures that had reached 99 at noon.

Warren Peck, at 2507, is an arts and crafts teacher for the Department of Education, currently assigned as an instructor with the Manpower Development and Training Program.

He has lived in the area since 1952, when he was discharged from the Army.

"I was in World War II, stayed in the reserves, and like a fool, got caught when the Korean fighting broke out," he said.

Mr. Peck, who served as a aerial reconnaissance photographer during his army career, says he won two purple hearts and three bronze stars.

At one time his plane was shot down 20 miles behind enemy lines in the Chouchan Valley in North Korea.

The pilot was killed, but Mr. Peck and three others managed to reach friendly lines in three days after 20 grueling miles of hiking.

"Sometimes we came so close to walking right into Communist camps," Mr. Peck recalled. He suffered a head wound from a rifle butt in one encounter with a North Korean guard, but he and his comrades managed to subdue the guard without arousing what appeared to be a battalion encampment.

* * *

MR. PECK'S war experiences have made him bitter about wars in general. "What's going on in Vietnam is so futile — all wars are futile — we've got to learn to settle these things around the conference table," he said.

Like most of the residents in the block, he is a native Baltimorean. A graduate of St. Emma's College in Rock Castle, Va., he worked as a Pullman porter for several years before he was drafted into the army, and later returned to the railroad.

"There was good money in it in those days," Mr. Peck maintains. "As a matter of fact, it was primarily money saved up from his railroad work that enabled him to buy the home in 1952, he said.

He paid $11,500 for the house when the neighborhood was undergoing racial change. Like most of the homes in the block, it contains four bedrooms, a living room, dining room, bathroom, and powder rom, with a number of the homes having club cellars.

Mr. Peck's living room furniture includes a number of upholstered chairs, made by the boys in his classes at School 42. "It's a good program — a kid can make good money once he picks up the skill," he said.

He said he has been with the Department of Education for 17 years.

* * *

MR. PECK is one of 11 teachers living in the 2500 block of Harlem Ave. Among the residents are at least two ministrs, a nurse, two proprietors of beauty salons, three Social Security Administration employees, and a number of retired persons.

Like many similar neighborhoods in the city, the residents have banded together to protect the area from the erosion of commercialism, especially bars.

The Evergreen Protective Association meets on the third Monday of each month, at Union Memorial, unless some current campaign demands more frequent meetings.

The association is given credit for the fact that the nearest bar is four blocks away at Poplar Grove St. and Edmondson Ave.

Recently the group campaigned successfully against the location of an automatic laundry in the area.

* * *

THE NEIGHBORHOOD is typical also of Baltimore's changing racial patterns. Miss Julia A. Knoerr, has lived with her two bachelor brothers at 2525 since 1926, when she purchased the home for $6,915. They are the only white residents in the block.

"The real estate people used to call me all the time, but I settled them — I made it clear that I didn't intend to move anywhere.

"I like the neighborhood and it's a good place to live," she maintained.

The neighborhood began changing in early 1950's, she recalled. "I thought it was silly the way people began to move out, but some people will complain about anything.

"Most of the people here knew each other when I moved here. I know more of my neighbors now than I did then," she added.

* * *

A FORMER secretary for the late Jacob France, well-known Baltimore lawyer and founder of the Equitable Trust Bank, Miss Knoerr remembers meeting the late Dr. Carl Murphy, publisher of the AFRO-AMERICAN when he came to Mr. France's office.

Contrary to claims of opponents of fair housing who say property value drops when integration comes, Miss Knoerr believes that property values have improved in the block over the past 15 years.

"Everybody takes more interest in keeping their places nicer than people used to," she noted.

One of the ministers in the 2500 block of Harlem Ave. is the Rev. N. B. Carrington, 2511, who retired last year after pastoring Union Memorial Church for 13 years.

The Rev. Mr. Carrington, who was supervisor of the AFRO's pressroom for 21 years, recalled that he worked on the 42nd and 50th anniversary editions of the newspaper in 1942.

"I married, baptized and buried many of them down there — matter of fact they call me the AFRO's chaplain," the 70-year-old minister said fondly.

* * *

THE REV. MR. CARRINGTON recalls that Union Memorial Church, which moved

(Continued on page 15)

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