Elderly couple may get aid on costly 'home improvement'

By Ann Sagi
AFRO Staff Writer

An elderly Columbus Road couple who claim they were victims of shoddy workmanship by a home remodeling company may be able to get satisfaction from a state agency.

As reported in an AFRO story March 6, Lawrence and Louise Lawson contracted with Globe Improvement Co. in March 1978 for a refurbished kitchen. The $4,200 improvements included 17 feet of cabinets, a stainless steel sink and formica countertop, a linoleum floor and a smoke detector. The 19.5 percent finance charge boosted the total cost to over $5,000.

Three months later the Lawsons were unable to make a $107.48 monthly payment because Mr. Lawson, 77, was in an accident in which he lost both legs. The attorney for Baltimore Security Co., which finances work for Globe, filed a lien against the Lawsons' property.

Now, one year later, Ms. Vivian Lawson, their daughter, is making the monthly payments to keep her parents' house off the auction block. And the so-called remodeled kitchen has a non-working smoke detector and gold linoleum that is cracked and broken in corners.

Ms. Lawson is angry because she claims the work is faulty, it cost too much, and she feels her parents were taken advantage of because they did not understand the terms of the contract.

The Maryland Home Improvement Commission may be able to help correct the workmanship done in the Lawson's kitchen.

Thomas Eminizer, executive director of the Commission, said certain aspects of the Lawsons' predicament indicate "a situation the Commission needs to look into."

The procedure to involve the Commission begins with a written complaint from a dissatisfied customer.

Eminizer said the commission cannot act unless they have a complaint on file and courts will not consider any grievance unless the homeowner is willing to testify.

Eminizer said he personally reviews all complaints and if the contractor is licensed, as is Globe, the contractor has 10 days to respond to the Commission.

If the licensed contractor's response differs from the contract, the commission calls an informal hearing with the parties involved. The hearing may take place before or after the Commission receives the case.

Eminizer said the Commission "exercises some influence over the proceedings" and an informal hearing sometimes resolves the problem.

The most rapid way for the contractor and the homeowner to resolve their differences is for the improvement firm to re-do the work, he said.

If the two parties still do not agree, a formal hearing, including testimony given under oath recorded by a court reporter, is held. And in some cases, the unsolved dispute may go to Criminal Court, Eminizer said.

Commission records show that 145 formal hearings were held in 1978.

The Commission seldom makes decisions about refinancing work completed, Eminizer said, particularly if it is done through a third party.

"The Commission can make it known that they are concerned about bringing about a satisfactory resolution for the homeowner," he said. "But I know of no situation where the commission requires the contractor to lower payments."

Holly sues Walker

Dennis Holly, television anchorman for WMAR-TV Channel 2 News, has sued WFBR Radio Station announcer Johnny Walker and the Baltimore Radio Show Inc., licensee of the station, for slander in the amount of $1 million.

In a brief filed by his attorneys Tuesday, March 6 in Baltimore City Court, Holly charged that Walker, whose legal name is James Embrey, did "knowingly, maliciously and deliberately defame" Holly by slander by allegedly stating that Holly tore a ligament in his knee while a participant in the looting Feb. 18 to 21.

The attorneys have also asked $1 million in punitive damages and requested a jury trial.

According to the brief, the statements were made on Feb. 28 at approximately 6:15 a.m. and again at 8:25 a.m. during Walker's early morning talk and music show which airs on WFBR from 6:00 a.m. to 10 a.m. Monday through Friday.

The brief stated that Walker "acting for and on behalf of Baltimore Radio Show Inc. "entered into a conversation with another employee on the air Feb. 28 where Walker allegedly announced that Holley was going into the hospital March 6 for surgery on his leg.

The papers filed by Holly's lawyers also stated that the WFBR employee, on the air, allegedly asked Walker how Holly hurt his leg and Walker said "he tore a ligament running down the street carrying a color television set during the '79 blizzard."

Holly, who seriously injured several ligaments in his knee at a Santa Claus Anonymous football game Nov. 13, 1977, was in St. Anthony's Hospital in St. Louis, Mo. undergoing knee surgery at the time the brief was filed and could not be reached for comment. This makes Holly's second operation on the knee having undergone surgery Dec. 5, 1977.

Holly's attorney Marvin Ellin was also out of town and could not be reached for comment.

Representatives for WFBR, Walker and Baltimore Radio were unavailable for comment.

According to the brief, Walker's remarks allegedly accused Holly of committing a felony and holding him up to ridicule thereby "injuring his professional career as a television personality."

The brief also said Holly suffered embarrassment and humiliation from the alleged comment and that it became the topic of racial jokes throughout the state causing Holly "emotional pain."

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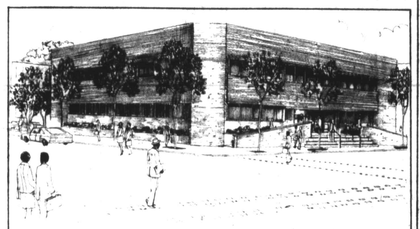
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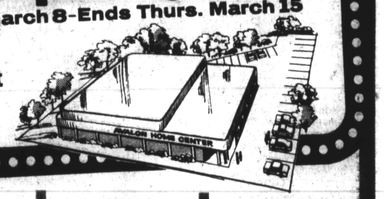
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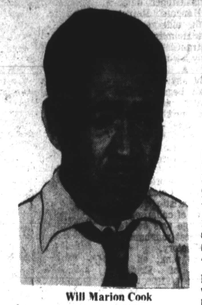
Who was Will Marion Cook?


Will Marion Cook
August, 1938
AFRO file photo

By Ida Peters

Will Marion Cook was a composer and a talented musician credited with advancing the new music of his day," swing."

He was born in Washington, D.C. January 27, 1869. He was educated at Oberlin College, the New York Conservatory of Music and studied violin under the famed Anton Dvorak.

In 1898 he co-wrote with Paul Laurence Dunbar "Clorindy-The Origin of the Cakewalk" which he presented in Washington, D.C. and later at the Casino Theatre in N.Y. at 30th and Broadway.

Cook discovered his wife, the great soprano Abbie Mitchell in Baltimore, when she was 12, and starred her in "Clorindy." He married her two years later. Their son was Will Mercer Cook, Professor of French at Atlanta University and Howard University and author, educator and composer in his own right.

In 1906, Will Marion Cook was musical director of the Memphis Students' Orchestra [illegible] as the featured attraction at Oscar Hammerstein's celebrated Victoria Roof Garden with Abbie Mitchell as novelty songstress.

In 1918 he formed the N.Y. Syncopated Orchestra which later became the American Syncopated Orchestra in 1919.

His theatre presentations included "Jes Lak White Folk: A Musical Playlet," 1899; "The Policy Players," 1900; "In Dahomey," 1902; "Abyssinia," 1906; "Bandanna Land," 1907; "Darkydom," 1914.

He also wrote for Black Patti's Troubadours and was vocal coach for "Great Day" 1929. His only unproduced theatre piece was "Cannibal King."

Throughout his life he received royalties from the American Society of Composers, G. Schirmer, Inc. and Robbins Music Corp. of New York.

His musical compositions included "Bon Bon Buddy," "Rain Song," "I May Be Crazy, But I Ain't No Fool," "My Lady," "I'm Coming Virginia," "That's How the Cakewalk's Done," "Swing Along Children," "Down the Lover's Lane," "Red, Red Rose," "Mammy," "A Little Bit of Heaven Called Home."

He completed "A Little Bit of Heaven Called Home" in 1941 with his son Will Mercer and Alberta Hunter sang it on the NBC radio chain, being called back from Europe for this show.

Will Marion Cook died July 19, 1944 at the age of 75. Off and on he spent a lot of time in Baltimore giving his address as 1402 Druid Hill Ave.

He died of a lingering illness at Harlem Hospital in NYC. His estate was handled by Baltimore's Orphans Court with E.Everett Lane as attorney.

He left his estate to his grandson, Mercer Cook, 3rd, who in 1946 was 16 and a pupil at Dunbar High School in Washington. He inherited all accumulated royalties from the composer at the age of 30. Dr. Mercer Cook the professor of French at Howard University and his wife, the former Vashti Smith of Baltimore, were appointed guardians but were unable to serve as executors of the estate. Judge William H. Hastie, then governor of the Virgin Islands was named to manage young Cooke's estate in event of the death of either guardian.

Danise Wilson adds color to the circus

The circus is coming

Ringling Brother's Barnum and Bailey's 109th Edition of the Circus comes to town Monday, March 12.

To watch the famous elephant walk, be at the North Avenue Bridge when the circus train unloads. You can watch the elephants unload and walk up North Avenue then downtown to the Civic Center. Walk starts about 9 a.m..

Kids can win free tickets to the circus and be clown on AFRO-AMERICAN Newspaper Night, Thursday, March 15, by coloring the clown in this issue and mailing to 628 N. Eutaw St. before the deadline, March 13.

Together team- Jazzy, funky-Latin

Al Jarreau and Angie Bofill

The last time Al Jarreau and Angie Bofill played together, December 1978 in Constitution Hall, standing-room-only crowds greeted them.

The jazzy, funky-satin duo will be doing the same thing Saturday night at Painters Mill.

Recently, Al Jarreau won a Grammy for his latest album, "All Fly Home." In 1977, he also won a Grammy for Best Jazz Vocalist and he won the German Grammy for "Best International Artist" and the Italian Music Critic's Award as Best Foreign Artist.

"A most exciting vocalist he'll be singing hits from "All Fly Home" including "Thinkin' About It Too," "All," "I Do," "The Dock of the Bay," "She's Leaving Home" and "Wait A Little While."

Angie Bofill is a Latin bombshell who has astonished the music world with her first album "Angie." She's a former lead soloist with New York's Dance Theatre of Harlem and has performed with Dizzy Gillespie and Cannonball Adderly.

Only 24, her debut album produced by Dave Grusin and Larry Rosen for Arista Records has some of N.Y.'s finest musicians. They include Ralph McDonald, Michael Brecker, Patti Austin, Steve Gadd, Eric Gale and members of the Dance Theatre of Harlem Choral Ensemble.

Angie will be singing her new tunes including "Rough Times" a disco flavored Ashford and Simpson song, "Children of the World," "Baby, I Need Your Love," and "Share Your Love."

Al Jarreau and Angie Bofill

New movie- 'Fast Break'

Crooked coach...dumb players!

By Ida Peters

If the TV industry and the movie moguls want my business they're going to have to stop beating me in the teeth with stereotyped NEEGROES.

They're going to have to remember I don't have to do anything but die and be poor. I don't have to turn my TV set on to watch anymore "Roots" and I don't have to see Gabe Kaplan in "Fast Break."

I didn't see much outpouring of letters to the AFRO protesting "Roots 2" showing blacks turning the other cheek to the Klan or Alex Haley playing the Macho Man in bed with his PhD. girlfriend.

The white press is doing a number on us again in reporting that the new movie "Fast Break" starring Gabe Kaplan of "Welcome Back Kotter" fame, is "entertaining," "smartly paced with easygoing humor punctuated by brief flashes of insight."

"Fast Break" is about a school with teachers and no principles. The first indication that "Fast Break" might be offensive is when Gabe Kaplan, as a Jewish delicatessen clerk, David Greene, meets the president of Cadwallader University. "I've never met an ethnic before," the president says

Gabe Kaplan gathers his battered charges for a pep talk in "Fast Break."

streets. He tells them they don't have to worry about [illegible] courses . . . just playing basketball.

So, in the first 20 minutes there's the bigoted president, hiring of the curiosity piece Jew to coach an ignorant all - black basketball team including a token female and a few uncoordinated whites thrown in for racial balance.

For this sloppy insensitive treatment of black athletes, a few black artists, actors and professionals got jobs. Big deal, when you consider the overall damage. Then you wonder why kids are so hostile . . . another case of saying "You're nobody."

Bernard King, the all - pro powerhouse of the New Jersey Nets plays the pool - shooting center, "Hustler."

Mavis Washington, a Riverside, California school teacher is cast as "Swish" the distinguished female forward.

Harold Sylvester, of "Sounder II" fame, plays D. C. Dacey, the one - time high school star who opted out of basketball for the numbers game.

Michael Warren who starred in "Norman, Is That You?", during his playing days at UCLA used to be a scrappy guard to Kareen Abdul - Jabbar's center in real life. He plays role of Preacher, a self - styled evangelist with a flair for seduction.

Actor Reb Brown plays Bull, a football tackle who plays basketball because Cadwallader doesn't have a football team.

So some blacks got some acting jobs. It makes you wonder if a lot of basketball coaches are like Greene (Kaplan) and if they are, they are not funny and maybe a Senate investigation is in order.

in his best Southern drawl.

The white athletes at Cadwallader are all bumbling hayseeds, so Greene recruits a black team from the New York

Night Scene Seen

Reviving AFRO After Hours Tradition

with Bob Matthews

Byron's West

Decided to go down what has been called the "Monroe St. corridor" this week, and there was beautiful weather for the Wednesday night trek.

First stop was 'Byron's West, more popularly known as Double-O-Seven. There was a goodly crowd gathered — all clustered around a small television set — and intently watching the documentary "Scared Straight," which was designed to show young prisoners what it's like behind bars.

The crowd was unanimous in its approval of the film, and weren't at least offended by the raw language in the documentary. Even the barmaid, Myrtle Rose was caught up in the TV events, but chatted with us for a moment.

Discovered she has been at Byron's West for 2½ years and says Friday is the biggest night at the club. In fact, she said there is a party going on there tonight (Friday) which should be a goodie.

Myrtle Rose
Byron's West

Pamela Davis
Maceo's

Sandy Smith
Red Rooster

Esther Couser
Phil's

Maceo's

Just peeked in the door at what was once called Slim Rae's now Jackie's across the street, we'll reserve our visit there for another session — and moseyed on down the street a block to Maceo's.

The club has improved considerably since we were last there. In fact, by bar standards in this town, the place looks almost plush. There was a lot of well-dressed men lining the bar, and when we talked with barmaid Pamela Davis, she told us why.

Seems that Maceo's doesn't serve food any more, but has meeting rooms available. So there are a lot of meetings which take place in the club rooms. Over in a corner a 3-handed cutthroat pinchie game was in progress with the kibitzers pouncing on every play.

Noticed one little difference in the bar setup. This was one of the few bars we've visited where there were no meters on the bottles, nor miniatures. It was a "barmaid, pour it into a shot glass" type of operation, which is rare these days.

Red Rooster

Veered off Monroe St. just a whit to look in on the Red Rooster once again. Saw Coach Earl Banks comfortably seated at the bar, who informed me "this is my office." Which isn't exactly accurate, but does indicate the esteem in which the Rooster is held as a meeting place for sports figures.

Sandy Smith was doing the barmaid chores, and vehemently claimed that she does indeed wait the tables in one place, but obviously can't do so when the bar is busy.

Food is still the big item here, and the main cook is called "Miss Annie." Her complete name is Annie Richburg.

Phil's

Intended to drop into the Uptown Lounge, but believe it or not, couldn't find a place to park, so put it on the agenda for further exploration later.

Whipped around to Mount and Mosher, to revisit Phil's. Last time we were there, it was the day after the big snow, and none of the barmaids made it in.

They were there in full force this time, with two on duty, and one who was off, just enjoying the proceedings at the bar. Esther Couser, Carolyn Bolding and Lauretta Parkinson were the three in attendance.

This is still one of the busiest bars in town, in fact, the package goods side seems to always have a waiting line. Discovered that a part of it was for the food.

(Continued on Page 33)