Black-owned printing business still flourishing after 72 years

By Yvonne J. Carter

The very successful Murray Brothers Printing Company, Inc. has meant a lot of things to Mrs. Ethel Murray.

"To me the business is very dear because I've been able to do things for my family and people," Murray, who recently celebrated her 88th birthday, explained.

"I have been able to send my children and grandchildren to the best schools in the country. I have so much to be thankful for," she added.

Murray's grandson, Carl Jorgenson, attended Harvard, Yale and the University of Chicago. He is now teaching at Berkeley in California. Her granddaughter, Jenny Jorgenson, now living in Chicago, attended Wellesley.

Another grandson, F. Magruder Murray, graduated from Howard University and his brother, Norman is a graduate of the University of Lowell in Massachusetts.

Ethel Murray retired as treasurer and business manager of the corporation July, 1978.

The exact date of the Murray Brothers Printing Company, Inc.'s origination is not known. Freeman Murray, the patriarch of the family, tried unsuccessfully to get into printing.

Instead, he became the first black proofreader for the federal government.

The legend follows that Murray gave his three sons a small hand press for Christmas in the late 1890s. The press was capable of printing cards and tickets only. From this gift, the Murray Brothers began the business which is still in existence and now employs fourth generation Murrays.

In the early 1900s there was not a great deal of printing available for black people. The company printed fliers, coupons and tickets for community organizations and local churches. In an effort to enlarge the business, the Murrays started the Washington Tribune in 1917. The Tribune a black weekly, enabled the company to buy large presses.

Around 1925 it became difficult for the family to run the paper. At that time the FRO-AMERICAN Newspaper in Baltimore was doing well and wanted to move into the District. Rather than bring in new people and remove the family flavor, the Murrays decided to sell the paper to the AFRO and go into commercial printing.

Printing plants have been located at 405 N. Alfred St., Alexandria; 609 F St., N.W.; 1753 7th St., N.W. In 1917 a building was constructed at 918-922 U St., N.W. Incorporated in the District in 1923, Murray Brothers still occupies the building and has acquired two adjacent buildings.

During the 1920s and late 1930s the building at 922 U St. was best known as a casino. A lot of jazz artists converged there before the Masonic Temple was built at 1000 U St., N.W. After the Masonic Temple drew the crowd, the Murrays changed the top floor to a bowling alley. When the temple built a bowling alley, the Murrays decided to rent the space.

Since then, Model Inner-City Community Organization headed by Congressman Fauntroy and the Mid-town Montessori School occupied the second floor.

Around September, 1978 the company took over the whole building. Today, the Murray Brothers is the largest wholly black-owned printing business in the Metropolitan area. It employs 21 people at present and in the past has trained more black tradesmen than it can count. It is controlled by the grandsons of Norman Murray.

Norman Murray one of the grandsons is the business manager and his brother, F. Magruder Murray is the general manager. F. Magruder's wife, Andrea is the executive secretary and treasurer of the corporation.

"The business has followed the general trend of our liberation. It originally started as a small printing shop. In the 1920s we did work for the Masons, usher organizations, Howard University, religious groups and social organizations," Norman Murray said.

"In the last 15 years as we blacks have become better established, the company began contracting with Western Electric, Westinghouse, IBM, Amtrak and Metro," he pointed out.

"We have actually doubled our sales. Ninety percent of the work is a result of competitive bidding. Ten percent of the work is from minority businesses. We are trying to expand that now," he added.

Murray Brothers has striven to meet the competition of the present printing world and now operates a typesetting department, preparation department, composition and letter-press departments on its premises.

Murray Brothers is a member of the Printing Industry of America; Board of Trade of D. C.; Life Member of the NAACP; D.C. Chamber of Commerce; Anthony Bowen Branch of the YMCA and various other civic and trade groups.

OLD PRINTING PRESS was used by the Murray Brothers to publish the Washington Tribune, now combined with the Washington AFRO-AMERICAN.

MURRAY BROTHERS PRINTING CO. is the largest black-owned printing company in the District of Columbia. Pictured are (L to R) Norman Murray, business manager; F. Magruder Murray, general manager; and Freeman Murray, president.

Loan delinquencies rise at slow rate

Mortgage loan delinquencies at the nation's savings and loan associations rose last month but remain well below levels experienced at the height of the last recession, the United States League of Savings Associations reported.

The June delinquency ratio was 0.76 per cent, compared with May's 0.71 per cent. However, last month's figure was significantly below the 0.97 percent reported for June 1975 — during the peak of the 1974-75 recession.

The June 1979 delinquency figure was 0.63 percent, the lowest monthly figure recorded since the League began keeping delinquency data in 1953.

The low level of mortgage delinquencies last month shows that "despite severe pressure on household budgets, homeowners are continuing to protect their housing investment," said William B. O'Connell, League executive vice president.

The June delinquency figure was based on results of a survey of 1,027 savings associations holding 60 percent of the business' $591 billion in assets.

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Urban League has comprehensive programs

The Baltimore Urban League Inc. operates 11 programs and projects in the areas of employment, education consumerism, youth, health, welfare and housing.

The mission of the Urban League Movement is symbolized by the equal sign and its motto, "Building For Equal Opportunity."

In addition to direct services, the League intervenes at all points in the social and economic structure of the Baltimore metropolitan community where the interests of blacks, other racial minorities and the poor are at stake.

Founded in 1924, the Baltimore Urban League is one of 116 affiliates of the National Urban League Inc. One of the unique features of the Urban League movement is that local affiliates are autonomous bodies which enable them to tailor programming to meet the specific needs of their respective communities as well as to rely on the support of the National Urban League and the other affiliate leagues across the country.

Realizing from the outset that if progress was to be made in bridging the gap between the black and white community, the league adopted the concept of interracial participation yields results.

Under the leadership of Travis W. Vaula, president, the Baltimore Urban League utilizes a combination of locally initiated programs and projects as well as national programs to deal with problems which are faced by blacks and other minorities daily as they strive to obtain equal footing in this community.

The 11 programs and projects operated by this agency are: Broadcast skills bank; Consumer services; Education and youth incentives; Labor education advancement.

Also, labor education advancement, student enrichment, Youth diversion, Economic development and employment, Health, welfare and housing and manpower service centers, Mondawmin Shopping Center, Westside Shopping Center.

Broadcast Skills Bank

Designed to increase minority employment in the broadcast industry, the Broadcast Skills Bank served more than 600 persons during 1978.

Funded by area broadcasters, services include a job bank to inform qualified or qualifiable applicants of vacancies in the industry, a clearinghouse of information for training opportunities, career counseling and financial aid counseling for those pursuing professional training in the field of broadcasting.

The field of broadcasting is very competitive, particularly talent positions.

Persons in talent positions receive a lot of exposure, and many persons interested in working in the field are attracted to these positions unaware of other careers which are not as visible but crucial to the operation of television and radio stations. The bank attempts to interest applicants in these areas because of the career opportunities available in behind - the - scenes - positions.

Most of these jobs require degrees and experience, and in some cases, they are stepping stones to higher positions within the industry. If there is one common qualification, it is the need for experience. Experience is weighed heavily in the application process.

Although the bank is supported by a majority of the area broadcasters, there still remains a need for a further commitment by the industry. Many available positions are filled by persons who have had experience in the field which makes it difficult for a college graduate who has concentrated in media but has no work experience, to obtain one of these positions.

Throughout 1978, staff has attended seminars, workshops, conferences and visited all of the television and radio stations in order to boost the number of job orders the skill bank receives. Staff will continue its efforts to place more minorities in technical and managerial decision making positions.

Also during 1978, members of the newly formed Media Club which consists of 10th graders from local high schools who are interested in careers in broadcasting, spent time at local radio and television stations to better understand the industry. Club members also assisted staff in its participation in the 1978 AFRAM Expo.

There are not an abundance of jobs available in the industry; however, broadcasting does have a moderate number of career opportunities. Competitive spirit, perseverance and talent are three of the qualities needed to succeed and advance in this field.

Consumer Services Department

The field of consumerism continues to become more sophisticated as more and more persons endeavor to become alert purchasers of goods and services.

The Consumer Services Department offers a variety of services on consumer related issues to groups and individuals. Services offered by this phase of Urban League programming include consumer education legislation, wise shopping, aid and assistance in the area of tenant - landlord relations, and counseling of limited income consumers on how to utilize their funds more wisely.

During 1978, staff conducted training courses for 117 community school parent liaison workers on consumer oriented issues which included general buying hints, credit, insurance, where to find consumer protection agencies and the importance of compiling important papers into one easily accessible package.

In addition, the department continued to conduct consumer education sessions for senior citizens enrolled in the city's Eating Together Program. This program has been very successful in helping this segment of our community to become more aware consumers. The program is particularly helpful since many senior citizens live on a fixed income.

Also during the year, staff held training sessions for the staff of the Martin Luther King Child Parent Center which were aimed at helping them to better deal with consumer problems. Highlighted during the sessions was the recycling of old or outdated goods.

Realizing that the field of consumerism has not only expanded but has become more sophisticated and political, a new approach was developed by the staff.

Staff has undergone a series of training sessions to further enhance its capabilities as consumer specialists. This training will be an ongoing part of staff development.

The department's goal is to be able to reach more members of the community in order to alert them about various pitfalls in the marketplace.

One such example is the area of consumer credit and finance. Department not only provides counseling on the various types of traditional credit and how to shop for it, but also, sessions on some not so traditional types such as buying co-ops and neighborhood credit unions.

The Consumer Services Department will continue to work with other community organizations and persons interested in stimulating legislative changes that will aid individual consumers. This portion of departmental program is long term because it is important to work with legislators and businessmen to try and find equitable solutions to the problems which plague members of the community in the area of consumerism.

During 1978, a total of 5,407 persons were served by the department.

Labor Education Advancement Program

The Labor Education Advancement Program (LEAP) was established in Baltimore, in 1967, as the first such initiative in the apprenticeship area by the Urban League Movement. Because of the local affiliate's success during the pilot era, other LEAP projects have been established in 45 Urban League affiliates across the country.

LEAP, which is funded by the U. S. Department of Labor via the National Urban League, promotes, locates, motivates, guides, assists and places both men and women, primarily minorities, into registered apprenticeship training programs in the building and construction trades.

The project also assists men and women who are over the apprenticeable age and who have appropriate work experience to enter the construction trade as journeymen, advanced trainees and trainees.

In the mid 70s a women's component was added to this program as well as 20 other LEAPs around the country. The component assists women in obtaining non-traditional high paying jobs in the construction trade as well as in the industrial and manufacturing fields.

The apprenticeship program is geared for persons interested in receiving training for a career rather than persons just looking for short term employment. Persons who complete the program and become journeymen, have before them many career opportunities.

While in the apprenticeship program, the learner of the trade not only receives actual work experience, but he or she attends classes on a regular basis to expand his or her knowledge of the particular trade.

During this period of training, apprentices are paid on a graduating scale which will ultimately bring them up to the salary level of a journeyman when they complete their training.

Minimum qualifications for entrance into most of the skilled trades are that an applicant be at least 18 years of age, have a high school diploma or its equivalent and have good basic math and reading skills.

A special dimension of the program is that limited tutoring is offered to refresh applicants' memories in the areas of math and English so that they will be prepared to take the entrance exams for the trade they wish to pursue.

Since there is no set time when the various trades will accept applications, the LEAP office takes applications of interested persons year round.

The number of persons who are accepted in the various training programs is dependent upon the amount of work available in the particular skilled trades within the industry. The economic health of the country has a tremendous effect on the availability of training positions. However, the industry is optimistic about the starting of new endeavors which will increase the demand for apprentices and journeymen.

Construction and building trades which utilize apprentices are: asbestos workers, bricklayers, boiler makers, carpenters (millwrights and piledrivers) cement masons, electricians, ironworkers lathers, operating engineers, painters, plasterers, plumbers, sheet metal workers, steamfitters, sprinklefitters roofers (helper) and elevator constructors.

The prime objective of LEAP remains the same as it was in 1967. Methods have been refined to better serve applicants, and staff enjoys a closer working relationship with coordinators of the various training programs; the end result being increased minority participation in the skilled trades.

For the contract period of Nov. 1, 1977 to Oct 31, 1978 LEAP placed a total of 127 persons in one of the skilled apprenticeship programs or related industrial fields.

Economic Development and Employment Department

The Economic Development and Employment Department's (ED&E) primary charge is to recruit, interview, counsel and refer qualified persons to available jobs in the Baltimore metropolitan area. In addition to referring persons to positions, the department works with private and governmental sectors to develop more positions.

Staff is gravely concerned with the present and future employment trends as they relate to the community which the department serves. The demand for employment continues to outdistance job openings which has resulted in more tense competition for available jobs.

Recognizing this trend, the department instituted employment workshops during 1978. Entitled, "Preparation for Employment," these workshops are designed to enhance individuals' techniques in seeking employment. Personnel representatives from area corporations conduct the two-hour sessions which are held at the Urban League offices.

The sessions are open to all persons who are seeking a position and feel they they want to brush up on their job search skills. Since the workshops are conducted by the same persons who also interview prospective employees, clients have an opportunity to meet and talk with the representatives without the pressure of being in an interview setting.

Personnel representatives were impressed by the interest of the workshop participants and hopefully learned that not everyone fully understands the importance of effective communication skills, resume preparation and appearance.

As a result of "Preparation for Employment," the department received more job notices from par-

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