BUSINESS/REAL ESTATE

This week's financial section produced by P. E. Badham

Refurbished Ritz gears up for new business

By Portia L. Richeson
AFRO Staff Writer

Amidst all the revitalization going on in downtown Baltimore, one of the city's landmarks is doing its part for its own refurbishing to meet the needs of a changing clientele.

The Ritz, just across from the new Harborplace, opened its doors Oct. 29, sporting a new $150,000 look and decor after being closed for more than a month of extensive renovations.

Much of the three-level club, formerly the Playboy Club, has been changed to provide a more spacious and relaxing setting.

"It didn't appear that we were getting the kind of response and acceptance I thought we should be getting," says owner Dave Richeson. "Most of the renovations were tied into maintaining a Playboy Club image and format."

Richeson stated that while the changes were his original ideas, they were actually put on paper by Carmen Haskins, an interior designer who was in charge of the renovation project.

Ms. Haskins, head of Interiors by Carmen, is a black female who has had her own designing business for two years. She studied construction engineering and interior design at the Community College of Baltimore and the University of Maryland.

Although this is her first project at a night club, she has worked on such other projects as Morning Star Baptist Church in Catonsville and Frostburg State College.

"This is the first project I've taken on where I've done all the work, the planning, designing the renovations and the color schemes. But it wasn't very difficult," she said.

"I'm very pleased with it. I've had the finished product in my mind for eight months."

The dance floor of the ground level has been expanded to provide ample dancing space and another bar has been added to alleviate the overcrowding at the bar across from the dance floor. Mirrored walls around the bars and the dance floor give a more spacios look and give clubgoers a chance to watch themselves "Boogie."

The third level, used for live performaces by local as well as national artists, has a new bar and seating area. Part of the seating area can be converted into a dance floor by removing the tables and chairs which reveal a new parquet floor.

With both the ground level and the third level now offering a dance floor as well as bar facilities, Richeson reports that two private affairs can be accommodated at the same time.

Richeson also anticipates attracting a larger crowd of Washingtonians to venture from the nation's Capitol to the newly redecorated club.

But, he says, "It's too early to tell what impact Harborplace will have on the club. Hopefully, as Harborplace and the Convention Center grows, they will enhance our overall progress."

Richeson, a former IBM employee, is one of the former owners of Gatsby's, another black-owned club.

NEW DANCE FLOOR — Paul D. Smith and Lynda Sharp while attending the Maryland Minority Contractors affair at the Ritz recently "boogied" on the new expanded dance floor on the ground level of the remodeled nightspot.

AFRO Photo by Mark Gail

—Big win!

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establish a comfortable lead in the race, and the other black in the contest, William Murphy, finished in third place. Both victories were due to a larger-than-average black vote, which also benefited Judge Elsbeth Bothe, who received an eleventh-hour endorsement from Murphy's organization.

The Murphy brothers, Art and William, were both at the War Memorial Building as the final election returns were being tabulated.

Most of the votes had been received, and with several black areas still out, both Murphys were beginning to smile and relax.

William Murphy said that the Bothe endorsement was both hard-nosed and based on principle.

"Bothe clearly was supportive of the needs of our community, and there is a shortage of women on the bench," he said. "we also thought that we could beat Ward by endorsing her."

The strategy, which was orchestrated by Art Murphy, paid off with dividends, as Tom Ward lost his third bid for a Supreme Bench judgeship by 12,000 votes, finishing in sixth place behind Judge Bothe.

Although several obervers thought that Murphy had run a "racist" campaign, the victor told an audience at a post-election party that he was "not in the business of revenge, but in the business of correction."

—Home ownership

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percent of the total cost of the home, but also title search fees, utility transfer services, reporting of the deed, a percentage of the property taxes, and more. Through the terms of the program, however, all of these costs are included in the $500 payment.

WHY DO I NEED THE COUNSELING CLASS?

Because most of these home-buyers will be doing so for the first time. The classes are designed to teach buyers what to look for, will advise them on what to do if they fall behind in their mortgage payments, who to talk to if they do have problems in maintaining payments, who to talk to buyer can really afford, where he should look, and so forth.

Each applicant MUST attend the class and receive a certificate that says he completed it if he wants a home under the program. The certificate will be presented to the bank when it is time to apply for a mortgage, and encourage the bank to lend to the buyer, under the assumption that the buyer will be more able to handle his new property and not bring losses to the bank.

IS THIS — PROGRAM JUST FOR LOW INCOME PEOPLE?

No. Under the program, low income people are being given an advantage on the housing market in the city for nine months, but middle and high income people can also purchase homes under the plan, and receive mortgages at lower interest rates, money for rehabilitation and maintenance and all the benefits being accorded to low income families.

The program is an alternative for low income families to be a part of the house-buying boom of the city. If low-income families do not take part in the program, they will have to buy homes at regular rates and with no special provisions to help them, thereby decreasing their chances for home ownership.

CAN A SINGLE PERSON BE CONSIDERED A FAMILY UNDER THE PROGRAM?

Yes, as long as that person earns less than $18,000 a year.

SURVIVAL encourages readers to inquire into the program by calling 396-5935.

The program officially begins in December and the 30 percent of the funds for low-income families will be held aside for nine months. Act now.

City recoups $13 million

Benjamin L. Brown, city solicitor, announced that the Collection Section of the Litigation Division has recouped over $13.3 million dollars in monies owed the city for the fiscal period from 1975 through 1980.

The city solicitor said this was a "very significant increase over the 1968 through 1975 period where $6.7 million dollars came into the city coffers through the efforts of the Collection Section of the Law Department."

Brown also said that he "believes that collection efforts mirror what is going on in the economy and reflect aggressive actions on the part of his office to protect the city's financial interest."

According to William Hughes, associate city solicitor and chief of the Litigation Division, the collection efforts fell into three broad categories:

Collection of tangible personal property tax from individuals, Maryland corporations and foreign corporations. This is a tax due on inventory, furniture, fixtures and equipment and was the result of 10,169 law suits being filed and brought to judgment.

Collection of accounts due Baltimore City Hospitals for professional services rendered. This was the result of 1,400 law suits filed.

Collection of miscellaneous delinquent accounts due the city for property damage, rents, leases, etc. This is the result of 1,500 cases being filed.

Hughes praised the three attorneys who have been handling all the court work and the administrative assistant in the Collection Section, Ms. Jeanette Randall, for her "very able work over the last 10 years."

Hughes concluded by saying, "the marked increase in the monies collected also reflect the excellent cooperation between the Law Department and the Bureau of Collections."

NEW SHOP IN THE MALL — Rep. Parren Mitchell (L), a member of the Congressional subcommittee of Minority Enterprise, congratulates Shirrell and Bruce Brown on their opening of the Belvedere Valet Shop in the Belvedere Mall at Charles and Chase Streets. The Belvedere Valet Shop is the only shop of its kind in Baltimore offering custom-tailoring, cleaning, pressing, tuxedo rental, pick-up and delivery service and shoe repair. Mrs. Brown was formerly a customer representative at Mercantile Trust Company and Brown was a manager with Equitable Life Assurance Company.

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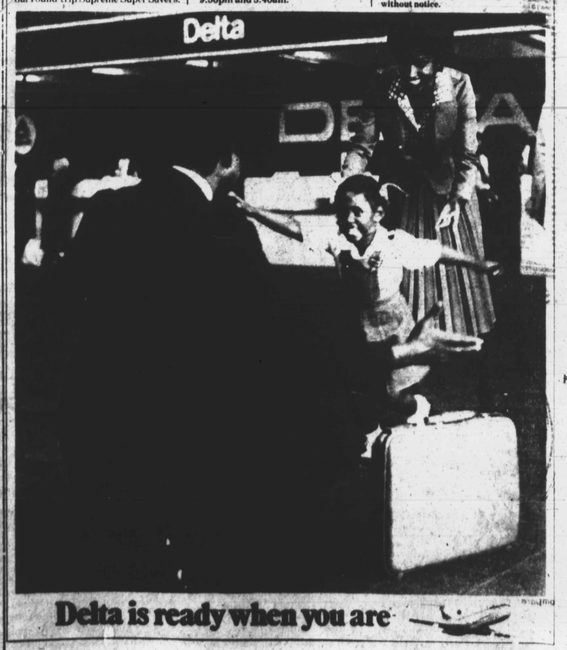

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