If you ask me

By Bettye Moss

People, things

Several Baltimoreans travelled to Hampton Institute for homecoming festivities over the weekend. (Hampton beat St. Paul 35-28).

Among them: Sylvia Rainey, the Errol Taylors, John Cox, Dr. and Mrs. Harold Johnson, (Mary), Charles Pressey, Ellen and Gleadi Johns, and Charlie Parrish.

The Wilbur Valentines (Courtney), are on a South American cruise.

Here from Washington for the Les Onze dinner dance on Saturday was Dr. Tomlinson D. Todd. He squired Louise G. Murphy.

Cuff note: Dr. Todd, retired McKinley High teacher, was honored last week at a retirment luncheon for his dedicated service to youth.

Here from Dallas, Texas, Mrs. Lorraine Wilson, Mrs. Betty Anderson; from D.C. Miss Barbara Moten and Lee McClain, guests of member Juanita Morton. Les Onze president is Bernice McDaniels.

Visitors from all over the United States were here for the 11th annual National Marshall Convention of the International F and M Masons and Order of Eastern Star.

The three-day session, (Nov. 7-9), was at the Lord Baltimore Hotel.

Supreme president, Dr. William U. Banks came from Detroit. Also here, Supreme Grand Master George Mathews, Niagara Falls, N.Y., Supreme Grand Matron Pernella Tubbs, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Baltimore hosts included George Pettis, grand master, state of Maryland, Mrs. Vera Styles Supreme Marshal, OES, came from Flint, Mich.

From Nedrow, N.Y., Alfred Blue, president of the National Marshal Council.

Chairlady of the 1980 convention here was Baltimore's Mrs. Katie Alston. She is president of the State Marshal Council, as well as of the East Central Marshal Council.

Links benefit

Members of the Silver Spring Chapter of Links Inc., attracted over 900 guests to their annual scholarship luncheon on Saturday at the Indian Springs Country Club.

Baltimore area residents there included: Frances Lockwood, Bernice McDaniels, Juanita Harris, Delores Scott, Marie Hicks from up Frderick way; Martha Brown and Inetta Gross and daughter, Angella; and Lorraine Brown and Gloria Henderson (she's Bertha Forte's daughter.)

Cuff note: Gloria won one of the many magnificent door prizes, a trip to NYC for two including dinner and theatre.

Columbia residents there: Celonia Walden, Carolyn Stubbs and Roberta Briscoe.

The luncheon honored Dr. Evelyn Scales, the D.C. educator about whom you read. She's the one who adopted three foster girls, (2 black, 1 white), and has seen them headed into successful careers.

Another interesting D.C. event was the dinner party that distinguished men's club, the Hellenes had on Sunday at the Sheraton Galaxy Supper Club in Arlington, Va.

The view from the rooftop of this hotel is breathtaking. A 16-piece band provided dance music. Soloist is Brenda Jones.

Most couples, once they were on the floor, stayed. Reason: After each number, the orchestra leader announced the next one. And get this — the numbers were short, sweet and befitting the age group of the dancers.

Charmettes

Back here in Baltimore on Sunday, members of an old Baltimore club, the Charmettes, gathered at the Mohawk, Ave. home of Stella and Jack Alston for the monthly meeting, where they included hubbies or escorts.

This group has been about the business of providing support to the less fortunate for years. Nearly 40 years ago, they included the late Police Sgt. Violet Hill Whyte among honorary members and supported her efforts on behalf of young people. They have regularly supported the AFRO's Mrs. Santa.

Members are: Marie Bowen, president; Victorine Adams, Henrietta Bailey, Mildred Stokes, Dorothy Wise, Josephine Smith, Margaret Roy, Rosalind Diggs, Juliette Carpenter, Delores Gregory, Mary McPherson, and the hostess, Mrs. Alston.

More visitors

What has been described as one of the most elegant weddings witnessed here in recent years was the Saturday afternoon ceremony uniting Vanessa Yvette Reid and the Rev. Andy Cleo Lewter Jr.

It was at Bethel AME Church, where her father, the Rt. Rev. Frank Madison Reid Jr., pastored before his elevation to the bishopric. The bridegroom, son of AME minister the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Andy C. Lewter Sr., Amityville, N.Y., also pastors in N.Y.

So this meant thatthe town was full of AME bishops and leading clergymen and lay leaders here to participate in and witness the event. Three busloads came from N.Y. alone.

One old Baltimore resident commented after the ceremony: "I haven't seen anything like this since Countee Cullen married Yolande DuBois. I still have my mother's AFRO clipping about it."

The bride's mother, Mrs. Adrenia Carter Reid flew in from St. Louis. She wore a full length mink.

The bishop's present wife, Irene (a picture in pink and mink stole), helped direct the wedding with family friend, Dr. Jean Bell Manning, who came from Langston University, Okla. (Dr. Manning and her educator-husband, Dr. Richard Manning, were in Africa with the Reids when the bishop was assigned there.)

Reid bishops

The bride's younger brother, the Rev. Frank Madison Reid 3rd, was best man. He and his bride, (Marie Holt, daughter of AME minister the Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Woody Holt of Kansas City), flew from Los Angeles.

Which reminds me to mention that they are godparents for our first grand, Shannon Elizabeth Braxton, daughter of Baltimore's Rev. Mr. and Mrs. Ronald E. Braxton (Marie).

Cuff notes: Bishops run in the Reid family. We remember the bride's grandfather, Bishop Frank Madison Reid Sr. We covered the AME convention meeting in D.C. in 1962, when he was elevated to the bishopric.

Also elevated at the same time, Bishop D. Ward Nichols and A. J. Allen. Remember at the time, Bishop Reid, at 41, was the youngest to win the church's highest office.

And, we remember that Bishop Reid Sr. died in Nov. 1962. He was stricken while preaching a sermon at a Havre de Grace, Md. church.

Perfectly beautiful was the wedding reception at the new Coppin State College Student Center. Mrs. Palestine Anderson catered the affair.

Delta Sigma Theta sorors sang the traditional salute to the bride.

Among Baltimore groomsmen, Mrs. Irene Reid's son, Kurt Schmoke, the attorney. His physician-wife, Dr. Patricia Schmoke, and infant daughter, were pretty as a picture.

With all the bishops and ministers participating in the wedding, it would be expected to be very solemn. But the father of the bride, Bishop Reid, relaxed the throng. He drew laughter when he said a very loud, "I do!", when asked who gave the bride away!!!

Memorable. The soloists: James Bason ('Once In A Million Years'), and Audrey Ferguson ('Entreat Me Not To Leave Thee'). Lionel Jiggetts combo played for the reception.

Get-well cards

Glad-you're-better cards to Mrs. James Griffin, (Cardrienne), the Westside Elementary teacher. She's resting at home from foot surgery.

Much improved is Mrs. Anthony Robinson (Yvonne Davis, the analyst). Her attorney husband was able to bring her home from Provident over the weekend.

On the mend is Dr. Clarence Gregory, the Community College prof, who is home from Lutheran Hospital.

And so is Father David E. Croll. Many remember him as the longtime associate priest at St. James Episcopal Church. He was in Mercy Hospital.

He's retired now, lives with a niece in Pasadena.

Cuff note: The Mrs. Henrietta Hucles Croll, who was buried last week, was the wife of Dr. Croll. In our growing up days they lived across the street from us on Ivy Ave., in Morgan Park. She was the teacher.

Doing better is Helena Edmonds, who had wrist surgery at Kernan. Able to be up and out is Hermione Weaver, who was in Sinai for surgery.

Recuperating at home is Mrs. Melvin Calaman (Muriel).

W. Gordon MacGregor, the longtime general director of the Baltimore YMCA, is confined to Children's Hospital.

Nannie Mae Hendricks
dead at 79

Sphinx's 'Myrth'

Several column back, we talked about taking a Baltimore visitor to the popular Sphinx Club and related how the old place has not changed a bit — the same old home atmosphere.

And, we talked about how customers, Sphinx Club owner, Charles Tilghman and friends, were so kind to a veteran employee, Myrtle Bailey Kess. (Everyone called her 'Myrt').

Sphinx frequenters and friends were present at the Dyett Funeral Home on Oct. 31, to say goodbye to 'Myrt' She died Oct. 29, in her apartment above the Pennsylvania Ave. club. She was 66.

Who was 'Myrt'? She was, as the funeral tribute noted, 'the mother of the Sphinx Club', the official hostess, a generous, kind, caring person . . . a lady to respect . . . a rare, true person . . . to be lucky and be counted among her friends was a great honor."

In her younger days, Mrs. Kess was employed as a governess and travelled all over the world. In later life, she returned to her native Baltimore, worked as an aide in the school system with her favorite people, the children, whom she loved dearly.

When she was younger, she sang on choirs in a number of East Baltimore churches, and taught Sunday School.

The Rev. Dr. Levester Waddy, Christ Temple Church, officiated at the funeral. Tributes came from W. Randolph Tilghman, son and co-owner of the club with his dad, Charlie Tilghman, and State Senator Clarence W. Mitchell 3rd.

Also from Ms. Willie Mae Burrell, teacher at School No. 103, where 'Myrt' worked; and tributes in song by Miss Earlibe Reed, Sphinx songstress.

Wasn't it nice that 'Myrt's friends gave her orchids while she could enjoy them? Back in August 1978, there was a retirement party at the Hilton Hotel. Her 'children' came from all over the United States to join in the salute.

Survivors include a sister, Mrs. Mary Bailey Ward, niece, Mrs. Gertrude Adams Venable.

Pallbearers were, Randolph Tilghman, mentioned above; William Washington, the club's manager; and James (Biddy) Wood, Andrew and Linwood Johnson and Clarence Booker, all longtime Sphinx members.

Cuff note: The funeral tribute noted that the music box in the Sphinx was playing 'Unforgettable' when 'Myrt' died, and added, "Unforgettable is the true word for this lady who gave so much of herself to bring a good feeling to 'lucky' friends."

Urban Services

Urban Services Agency held workshop, luncheon and banquet at Convention Center on Tuesday.

Mayor William Donald Schaefer, who declared this USA Week, was among honorees at the banquet.

Also honored for their support of this very important community-based group, were: State Senator Clarence Blount, who is also chairman of the USA Commission; Congressman Parren J. Mitchell and HCD's Robert Embry.

Senator Blount gave the keynote address at the luncheon. He urged listeners not to be discouraged by the political trend to conservatism, but to make sure the agency serves the people well and by so doing it will have a track record that will place it in good stead when the new Reagan administration takes over.

This line of encouragement was echoed by Mayor Schaefer, Congressman Mitchell, USA Director Lenwood Ivey, as well as coordinators, Dr. Benjamin Whitten and fastend T. Daniels, who presided at the events.

Rev. Darnell Johnson, vice-chair of USO Commission; Dr. Chester Wickwire, Hopkins U., chaplain offered prayers.

Going places: April Riley, who is "Miss Inner City 1980." She has a lovely speaking voice and was so poised as she gave 'The occasion' at the banquet.

Proud as punch — Upton Renewal's Lean Boone. She and the audience were thrilled by the musical presentation by St. James-Upton Choir directed by Charles Arnette.

Special awards went to Cleveland Brister, Clayton Tucker and Norman Ross. Daniel Comegys sang "Impossible Dream."

Our table companions included Mrs. Dorothy Matthews of Druid Hill Ave., one of the 31 USA commissioners. She's a member of City Temple Baptist Church.

Also at our table William B. Proctor, deputy director for USA's fiscal affiars, and Don Davis, vice-president of the board of directors for neighborhood transportation for BSA.

Oblate Sisters of Providence honored City Solicitor Benjamin L. Brown and physician-civic leader, Dr. Uthman Bey at their annual banquet on Wednesday evening at Martin's West.

St. Paul Baptist honors its pastor, Rev. George A. Crawley Jr., on Sunday at the Alameda Church.

Lawyers' Wives hold their annual benefit ball roast Sunday at La Fontaine Bleu.

Sympathy to...

Remember relatives of these neighbors who died last week:

Mrs. Nannie Mae Hendricks, 79, was eulogized on Saturday at Madison Ave. Presbyterian Church, where she was active in the Penny Club, Deaconess Board and United Presbyterian Women.

Surviving are six children, John and Lawrence Blackwell, Mrs. Ruby Deberry, Mrs. Hattie James, Mrs. Ethel Barham and Mrs. Emma Powell, and a brother, William Kidd.

Mrs. Anna C. Stewart, 82, leaves 94 immediate survivors. She was given last rites on Friday at St. Martin's Catholic Church. For over 30 years she worshipped at St. Peter Claver.

Survivors: Her husband of 55 years, James H. Stewart; eleven children, six sons — James J. Stewart, Francis T. Stewart, Patrick S. Stewart, Leon C. Stewart, John E. Stewart and Charles B. Stewart;

Five daughters — Mary E. Brown, Ann C. Moulden, Shirley B. Jones, Margaret E. Simmons, and Gloria C. Stewart:

And, fifty grandchildren, twenty-four great grandchildren

HAPPY PARTICIPANTS — A bevy of Urban Services officials and patrons beams as they survey the scene at the Urban Services Week activities currently in progress at the Convention Center. From (L to R) Dr. Lenwood Ivey, director. USA; Robert Embry of the U.S. Department of Housing and Community Development; Miss Inner City, April Riley; Rep. Parren J. Mitchell, Mayor William Donald Schaefer, Samuel Daniels, head of the Council for Equal Business Opportunity.

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Was prominent black burial site

Laurel cemetery abandoned not once but twice

By Portia B. Barham
AFRO Staff Writer

It is often said that history repeats itself and that seems to be the unfortunate case with Laurel Cemetery, once a burial site for many prominent black Baltimoreans.

The cemetery, which dates back to 1852, was located in the 2000 block Belair Road until 1952 when it was moved 12 miles out of the city.

Almost hidden from view, the supposed three-acre cemetery is surrounded by corrugated and stacks its space with trash, old furniture and weeds tall enough to cover the rare six-foot tombstones.

A story of neglect and suspected greed surrounds the once prominent burial ground where Frederick Douglass delivered an address During its dedication in 1852.

Among those buried there are Daniel Payne, founder of the AME Church, Rev. Harvey Johnson, Cavel Calloway, Dr. James Credlitz, and Bishop James Handy.

In 1952 the cemetery, owned by the Laurel Cemetery Company, began deteriorating from lack of upkeep and by 1959 bankruptcy proceedings were filed against the company.

The cemetery had become a dumping ground for area residents and a hangout for teenagers and drunks. Beer cans, old furniture and growing weeds nearly hid the burial area from view.

In 1967 the 12-acre property was sold to McKamer Realty Company for $100 even though one of the owners stated the value of the property was $1,500. McKamer Realty in turn sold it to Belair Road Enterprise for $15,000 according to Baltimore City Circuit Court records.

By 1968 bulldozers were on the site digging up the graveyard and tombstones were carried thousands away to a new home in Eldersburg, Md.

A bill introduced by then Delegate Marvin Mandel and passed in the General Assembly made way for the removal of the remains. The bill stated that at least 75 percent of the property must be abandoned and the condition of the property be a . health hazard to area residents.

However, the lot owners charged that they were not properly informed of the sale and proposed move to a new site and stated that notices only appeared in August 1968 in the Daily Record, a legal newspaper usually not read by the average citizen.

Their protests were taken to court in efforts to have the sale invalidated because of illegal activities during the sale and failure to notify kin of owners of the sale.

Determined as they were, the case did not go in their favor and in March 1969 Judge Anselm Sodaro refused to invalidate the sale. The Court of Appeals also followed suit and the lot owners dropped their fight. The cemetery became a Two Guys shopping facility in 1969 and it is believed that at least 3,000 bodies are buried under the store.

Herbert M. Frisby, who helped form the Laurel Lot Owners Association, recalls going to the cemetery on Belair Road to visit his father's grave. "The cemetery was so dense with weeds you couldn't get inside the place.

"I would take a bouquet of flowers and throw them over the fence and hope that they landed on my father's grave. It was my symbol of devotion."

Mr. Frisby, who hasn't been to the new graveyard in many years, says he does not believe that 400-500 remains were moved to Eldersburg. "After the land was cleared and settled I went to the cemetery and didn't see any fresh dirt. I went over it thoroughly and the dirt in the graves had not settled."

He reports that the lot owners were given $2,500 to help maintain the property but he suspects that the man hired to work as caretaker, a father of 14 children, pocketed the money which started the deteriorating process all over again.

Clement R. Mercaldo, one of the officers of McKamer Realty and a city solicitor, told the AFRO this week that he was unaware of the conditions of the current location and that he has not been involved with Laurel Cemetery since its sale in 1967.

In 1968 he is quoted in the AFRO as saying, "There will be some sort of care of the new cemetery such as the cutting of grass several times a year and it will never become like the old cemetery."

But that's exactly what has happened to Laurel Cemetery and now no one wants to accept responsibility for what happened.

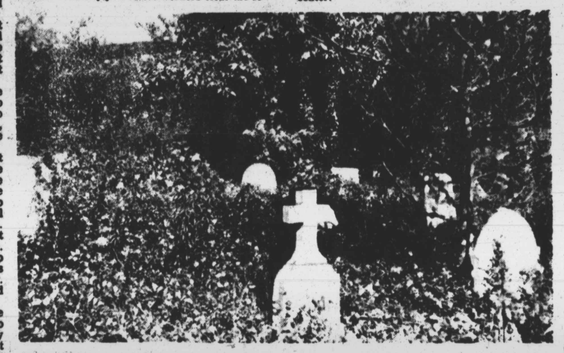
AFRO points the ownership of the land to Carolyn Johnson who lives near the cemetery, Mrs. Johnson could not be reached for comment.

The question that remains is now the squalid conditions at the present location can be changed and restored to make it the once beautiful resting place that it was. But who will take that responsibility? Mr. Frisby who is believed to be in his eighties, says he's "too old to fight now. I'll let the younger blood try to do something."

Meanwhile, the cemetery continues to deteriorate, nearly erasing one of the most visible signs of black history in Baltimore. Part of the research for this article was provided by Ralph Clayton, who works in the microfilm department of Enoch Pratt Library.

IN A CORNFIELD — This dirt road in Johnsville, Md. leads to the site of Laurel Cemetery which is nestled in the middle of a farmer's cornfield and has become a dumping ground.

BULLDOZERS TAKE OVER—In this 1958 AFRO file photo the remaining headstones are shown at Laurel Cemetery just before workers clear the 18-acre site, once the burial site for prominent black Baltimoreans, to make way for a new shopping center.



FORGOTTEN ONCE AGAIN—Laurel Cemetery, left to deteriorate at its original Belair Road location, was moved in 1958 to this area in Johnsville, Md. and again the lack of maintenance has caused the cemetery to be buried beneath trash, debris and weeds.

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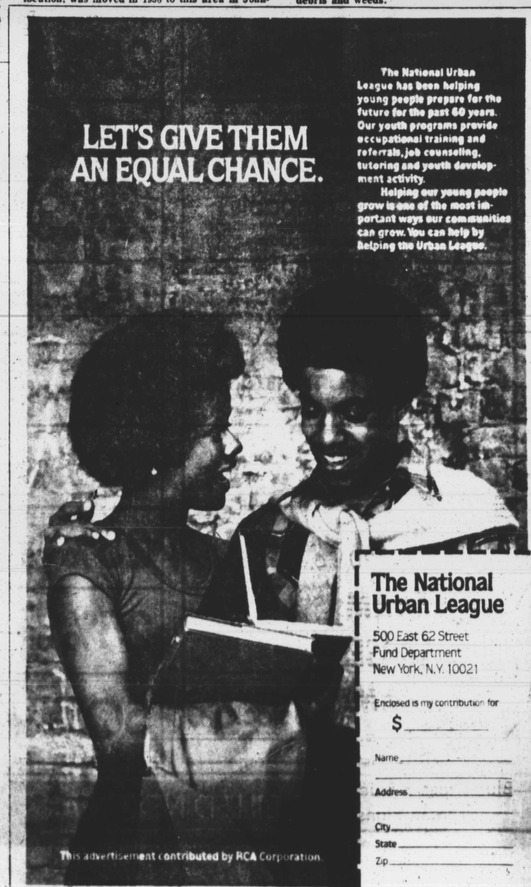

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