Del. Conaway introduces 250 pupils to the Maryland General Assembly

HIGH SCHOOL AND ELEMENTARY STUDENTS arrived at the state capitol in Annapolis by the busload for a day of learning how the government works and hosted by Del. Frank M. Conaway. A surprise greeter (right panel) was Edward Snowden, the lobbyist for Bethlehem Steel, Maryland's largest employer.

BLACK LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS head, Del. Frank M. Conaway, the host legislator, is shown (L to R) with Mrs. Jesse Gladden, assistant and Dr. Samuel L. Banks, head, both of the Baltimore Department of Social Studies; Lt. Gov. Samuel Bogley, James Smith, the pupil who sang "thank you" on behalf of the 250 students; Mrs. Dorothy F. Bennett, principal of the youngster's Rosemont Elementary School; Del. Isaiah Dixon, Mrs. Dorothy Chambers, department head and chairman of Social Studies, Fairmount Hill Jr.-Sr. High; Haruna Mohammad, Nigeria, a visiting African student; Loutrila Holly and Mary Gardner, Fairmount students and Pascal Joseph Obinnsia, Nigeria.

They learned about legislative process and enjoyed a spaghetti dinner all in one day

By Elizabeth M. Oliver, City Editor

All photos by Glasco Ryales

Host Del. Frank M. Conaway, the head of the Legislative Black Caucus; Dr. Samuel L. Banks, Lt. Gov. Samuel Bogley, Delegates Isaiah Dixon, Nathaniel Exum and Wendell Phillips talked to the Baltimore school pupils as they gathered in the Senate chambers.

They learned about the legislative process in the brief session, had their questions answered and then enjoyed a spaghetti dinner at the Asbury Methodist Church, a short distance from the State Capitol.

Among gifts were Lt. Gov. Bogleys pencils and a booklet by the Md. Classified Employees Asso.

Here are some points to be remembered when back at school:

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The legislative powers of the state of Maryland are vested in the General Assembly which consists of two branches the Senate and the House of Delegates.

Every senator or delegate must be a citizen of the state an a resident for at least one year preceding the date of his or her election.

For 6 months prior to his election he must have resided in his legislative district.

A senator must be at least 25 years of age at the time of his or her election.

A delegate must be at least 21 at the time of his or her election.

The term of each senator and delegate is 4 years from the second Wednesday of January following the date of his or her election.

The governor is required to appoint any vacancy that occurs in either house through death, resignation or disqualification; a person whose name is submitted to him by the state Central Committee or the political party with which the delegate or Senator, so vacating, has been affiliated.

The General Assembly meets annually.

Sessions begin the second Wednesday in January for a period of not longer than 90 days.

The General Assembly may extend its sessions for an additional 30 days by resolution approved by three-fifths vote of the membership in the House and Senate.

The governor may call special sessions at any time he deems necessary, for a period no longer than 30 days.

PROCESS

Following bills through the legislative process can be fun and educational for the interested citizen or casual observer. It is also easy.

Anyone who wants to follow particular legislation can easily keep up to date.

During the 90 - day session, the Office of Legislative Information is open to the public.

The employees there have at their disposal computers which follow the progress of every bill from the time it is introduced.

They can tell where a bill has been assigned whether it was passed in committee, whether it was amended and result of the floor vote.

You can call Legislative Reference at 841-3810 or (Toll Free) 1-800-492-7122.

Another means of keeping up with legislation is to call the committee to which the bills have been assigned.

YOUR LEGISLATOR

Do not be surprised if you find it difficult to reach a legislator by phone. Calls to legislators during the session are usually received by secretaries in the office.

You may leave a message, usually the best course of action if you are calling to register your opinion on a bill.

Find out if your legislators are in their home district on weekends and call them at home or office.

MAILGRAMS

You may send 10 words or fewer for $2.95. These are delivered the next day by the post office.

The toll - free Western Union number for Public

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MRS. BETTYE S. GRAVES, teacher and her Gist Elementary School children enjoyed the assembly in the Senate chambers and (center panel) Mrs. Helen Campbell, Social Studies department head and Mrs. Maggie Stokes, teacher, with their Garrison Junior High group enjoy the spaghetti dinner complete with punch.

DOUGLASS HIGH led by Mrs. Rita Crooms, Social Studies teacher, was well represented as were Fairmount High with William Hellen, teacher. Gist Elementary youngsters are shown with Del. Wendell Phillips, the lone minister member of the Legislative Black Caucus who said grace at the dinner at Asbury Methodist Church.

SHOWTIME

O'Donel Levy

He was blind... learned guitar in the projects

By Ida Peters

O'Donel Levy has been described by music critics as a splendid jazz guitarist; a talent capable of soaring to the loftiest heights, plucking the strings with fervid intensity on uptempo tunes and then cooling out to a mellow groove on ballads.

Tall, handsome, quick witted Levy, took time out from his chores at Gatsby's where he has been playing to packed houses with his high "energy level", delighting young, old and a mixed bag of fans.

Many fans know Levy from his hit album "Time Has Changed" and his work with Ethel Ennis on her new album "Ethel".

Levy is another success story from the Gilmor Projects. He was born in Baltimore to Edmond O'Donel Levy Sr. and a wonderful mother, Ruth Evelyn Pearl Johnston Levy. He was born at City Hospital and lived on Leadenhall Street before moving to the Gilmor Projects. He attended school No. 108 where he was another one of those "snotty nosed kids".

When he was about 9 he woke up one morning blind. He couldn't see. He had a retinal detachement. He had three operations at Johns Hopkins and was blind for more than a year. He creits his mother, a fantastic lady who gave him a lot of love during the ordeal.

He recovered and went on to Junior High school No. 181 then to Douglass with an ambition to major in Art and somewhere become a surgeon.

O'Donel Levy tells AFRO that he learned to value life when God gave him back his sight because so many people "look and can't see."

However, Boyd Anderson lived in the Projects (he's now retired from Bethlehem Steel) and all the kids heard him practing his Sax.

Hanging around listening and showing an interest, Anderson gave Levy a guitar and put his fingers on the instrument to play chord changes while he practiced.

Levy was only 16, but three weeks later he was able to go into night clubs with Anderson's band. He remembers he only knew three chords.

In the band that played Lou's on Eutaw Steeet and the Belmont on Franklin... neighborhood bars, were Chester Thompson, now the drummer with the English rock group; Joe Hosea, Mickey Fields, Johnny Polite and Dennis Fisher.

When he graduated from High School in 1964, the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation arranged for a scholarship to Peabody where he studied the classical guitar for two years.

He remembers he got straight A's and learned the technical aspects of his instrument but Peabody was "cut and dried school and did not generate much warmth".

By the time he was 19, he had formed a band the Wee Four Trio and was playing clubs on Pennsylvania Avenue like Buck's Bar, Club Casino and the Millionaire Club.

His most meorable experience was at the Millionaire's Club when a drunk came on stage and stabbed the piano player, Issac Perry, who died in Levy's arms.

Levy recorded his most successful album "Time Has Changed" in 1976, lived in North Hollywood, Calif. and has played on the same bill with such artists as Genesis, Minnie Riperton, Earth, Wind & Fire.

Levy came back to Baltimore in 1980 to work with Ethel Ennis on her album and has stayed to set up his own production company, ILM, (I Love Music) to brine a better recording quality to the Baltimore area.

His recording associates are Marcel Turner, bass; Bob Wyatt, drums; Robert Butta, keyboards; Alita Green, vocals; David Smith, horns; and Jimmy Wilson, trumpet.

Appearing at Gatsby's are Gary Richardson, bass; Willie Baba, drums; Robert Butta, keyboards; and Robert Supree, percussionist.

And, O'Donel Levy is single. He says he plans to stay that way because "I'm chicken".

Baltimoreans in Dance Theatre of Harlem Company now at Kennedy Center

When President Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy; Vice President and Mrs. George Bush occupied ajoining boxes in the Opera House of the Kennedy Center in D.C. for the opening night performance of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, two Baltimoreans, Thera Ward and Keith Saunders were in the company.

Thera Ward, now 16, started dancing when she was 8 with Ms. Gwen Biddle, Francine School of the Dance. She has studied dance for the past six years and is a scholarship apprentice at the Dance Theatre of Harlem in N.Y., one of the few classical ballet companies in the world.

Keith Saunders another Baltimorean began dancing in 1971 while a student at Harvard University and joined the Dance Theatre of Harlem in 1975. Since then he has participated in all of the companys national and international tours performing the works of George Balanchine, Arthur Mitchell, Louis Johnson and others.

Celebrities attending opening night at the Kennedy Center included Rep. Charles Rangel (D.-N.Y.) Rep Shirley Chisholm (D. N.Y.) and various White House aides.

The Dance Theatre of Harlem Company performed two classical numbers, "Serenade", choreographed by George Blanchine to music by Tchaikovsky and "Scheherazade", music written by Nikilai Rimsky-Korsakov and a modern piece set to jazz music by Gary McFarland.

Thera Ward is the daughter of Hollis Ward (Social Security) and Mary Lann Ward a School Counselor at the Baer School. She has one sister, Lela Ward who works in research at WETA-CH 26 in D.C. The family attends Sharon Baptist Church.

Thera and her sister both started their dance lessons under Ms. Gwendolyn Biddle, Francine School of the Dance. Thera was only 8 but Miss Biddle convinced her parents she had talent and by the time she was 11 she had begun professional dance training at the Jones-Haywood School of Ballet in D.C.

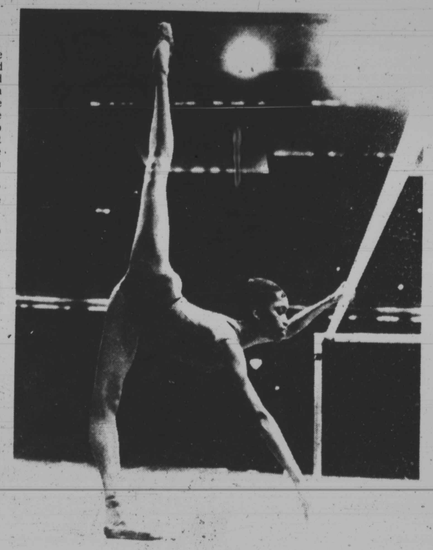
She spent three summers, 1975 thru 1977 in New York at the Dance Theatre of Harlem as a scholarship apprentice. In Baltimore, she attended Lafayette Elementary School and Pimlico Junior High for one year.

At 13, in the fall of 1977, she moved to New York in order to study full-time with The Dance Theatre of Harlem and stays with her Brooklyn cousins, the James Byrds.

In the mornings, she attends the Professional Childrens School in Manhattan and in the afternoons the Dance Theatre of Harlem where she studies ballet and pointe tap dance, modern dance, classical ballet and workshop rehearsals.

She now performs regularly in Dance Theatre of Harlem workshop productions and has a role in "The Four Temperaments, at the Kennedy Center.

For the past two years, Thera has traveled with Dance Theatre of Harlem Company performing at the Sadler-Wells Ballet in London, England.



Theara Ward started dance lessons at Gwen Biddle's Francine School of Dance.

In the summer of 1980 they performed in four cities in Australia and spent a week in Hong Kong.

Keith Saunders, the son of Jean and John Saunders, was born in Baltimore and began dancing in 1971 while a student at Harvard University.

He became a member of the Harvard-Radcliffe Afro-American Dance Theatre under the direction of Bill Mackay.

His training continued at the Institute for Contemporary Dance in Boston, studying Afro-American and modern techniques with Bill Mackay, and modern and jazz with Consuelo Atlas, formerly a soloist with the Alvin Ailey company.

He has made guest appearances at both the Boston and New England Conservatories of Music and has danced in two Harvard Dramatic Club Productions, Arthur Kopits "Indians" and Langston Hughes "Harlem In the Evening."

Keith Saunders is the son of Jean and John Saunders. His mother is with Social Security and his father retired government employee.

He attended Our Lady of Lourdes elementary school and McDonough School. He finished his high school at Mt. St. Josephs High School.

What theatre means to the black community

Dr. Percy Thomas

My intent is not to dwell on the atrocities and racist facets of the American theatre. Black people know too well the legacy of racism, and more poignantly the deficits of being a victim of institutional racism.

The outcome of racism, whether it is practiced in the halls of Congress, private corporations, federal agencies, Ku Klux Klan, or in the theatre, is everywhere the same. The end result of racism has a discriminatory and exclusionary effect on some group or another. Or one group is perceived as lesser or inferior, and is excluded.

Wherever it is practiced, it is deleterious to the group it is practiced against.

It is the same in the theatre. When racism is practiced in the theatre, opportunities for blacks to participate and develop within that institution are reduced or eliminated.

Why does America need a black theatre?

Before we can begin to answer the question of why America needs a black theatre, it is important to define theatre. Theatre is defined by Noah Webster (1979) as a structure for dramatic performances or spectacles.

Drama is defined as a composition in verse or prose intended to portray life or character, or to tell a story involving conflicts or emotions through actions and dialogue, and typically designed for theatrical performance. Webster's definition of theatre and drama apply to theatre in general.

If we view threatre from a universal perspective, all of what Webster said is true. However, for blacks to view American theatre from a universalistic perspective is inappropriate. America is a pluralistic society, made up of many ethnic groups. American theatre does not address itself to the particularistic interest of its multi-cultural populace. The American theatre has been remiss in its obligation to present theatre representative of the many groups living in this country.

The American theatre, present and past, has been largely racist and discriminatory in its practices. A review of the literature reveals that from 1917 to 1930, fifteen white playwrights, with various degrees of merit, presented works on the Broadway stage, dealing with black themes and characters.

At the time only five plays on black life by black playwrights managed Broadway productions (Oliver and Sills, 1971). Thus, much of the so-called black works presented on the "Great White Way" purportedly revelations of black experience, were written and directed by whites. These works, perforce, were culturally biased and covertly denigrating to blacks. When whites attempt to interpret and present black cultural perspectives on stage, they almost always manage to produce negative stereotypic images.

The historical background for this was born in the days of the traveling minstrel shows. White American minstrels performed in black-face 25 years before the first black minstrels made their appearce (Olive and Sills 1971). Through minstrel characterizations, white depicted blacks as being happy-go-lucky, shiftless, lazy, whiskey-guzzling, woman chasing buffoons. Such distortions, presented on stage, has left an indelible impression in the mind of the American public.

Recognition of the reality that American theatre does not address the artistic needs of many non-white populations must serve as an alerting signal to the black community that there is a need for black theatre.

What theatre means to the black community is inextricably connected to my colleagues have argues there is only American theatre. Such statements, by intelligent, middle - class, well - educated blacks point up clearly their lack of awareness of black drama, literature, or culture. University - trained blacks are generally ignorant of the history and culture of black people.

That they have graduated from American Universities, usually intergrated to the degree required by law, is indicative of the low priority in schools of higher education, as in the general culture, placed on black and culture. This lack of emphasis on black culture within the educational system is prevalent from kindergarten through graduate studies. With such an educational background, there is little wonder why there is little community awareness of black theatre. The University systems are charged, to a large degree, with the responsibility of educating. If students are not studying the works of blacks who have made significant contributions in literature and theatre, how are they to teach others of such works?

(To Be Continued)

The Arena Players held a preview party for Richard Wesley, playwright. His "The Mighty Gents" opens this weekend. Above from (L) Michael Kane who plays Frankie; Richard Wesley, Vinnie Covington, director; Harold Cornish, who plays Braxton and Camilla Sherrard, director, Arena Players.

Night Scene Seen

By Bob Matthews

Once upon a time, Tuesday was the big night in night club circles for some strange reason. Maybe it was because club owners had to resort to offbeat attractions to bring in the customers.

During the period when the then Lenny Moore's club showcased live music almost every night, it was standing room only on Tuesday nights here organist Greg Hatza, along with drummer Billy Murphy (yes, that one) occupied the center stage.

So now, Tuesday night has become big again, this time with the Ritz's the focal point.

When the big overhaul of facilities took place, Dave Richeson told us that the focus of the club would be a lessening of the couples-only tradition, and an effort to make things attractive for individuals who just want to go out.

Live comedy is presented in the Penthouse each Tuesday beginning this week, with the Warehouse Comedy Squad, one of the Nightscenes favorites, doing their thing beginning at 9 p.m.

They have a lot of new material, and magician-ventriloquist Josini has new dummy in bisxachis act. The new dummy is called Clyde, and according to Josini, gives him more flexibility and movement.

There is a $2 donation for the presentation, with the proceeds going the Redeemer's Palace Youth Outreach Program.

On the same evening, it is "Clay" night on the lower level, the music and dancing the order of business — and a packed room full of beautiful people, doing their thing, keeps the place rocking.

All this is on Tuesday nights, and the response, according to our sps, is terrific. They cite it as the place to meet and greet.

This weekend, Philippe Wynne, former lead singer of the Spinners, will put on three shows tonight and Saturday, with only a 10 p.m. show scheduled for Sunday.

On the living room level, Dave and Marlene Ross will be soothing the throng with their easy listening organ and vocal sounds.

Another benefit this week is the Left Bank Jazz Society presentation the Houston Person Quartet with Etta Jones, vocalist.

Proceeds from this concert will benefit organist Sonny Phillips, long mainstay of the quartet, who is ill with leukemia in a N.Y. hospital.

Out on Gwynn Oak Ave., the Sportsmens Lounge continues to present weekends of pure live jazz, with Ruby Glover and Andy Ennis on tap for the month of February.

The Saturday afternoon jazz jam this week showcases the Fuzzy Kane Trio with vocalist Earlene Reid

Bob Haynes told us he is bringing in singer Sonny Til, formerly of the Orioles, on the weekend of the 28th; and will present vocalist Dakota Staton on Mar. 6 and 7. More on these later.

Those 2 for 1 happy hours at the Garrison Lounge have really started to take hold, but there was a surprise in store for the unitiated, who didn't know that the policy extends to another time period.

From midnight until closing, the 2 for 1 policy is in effect. Which just goes to show, you should always read the small print.

One East Baltimore spot that seems to continually feaure live music is Henris in the 2000 block Harford Rd.

For example, tonight, the Pamoja Experience and Pockets are on stage, with Pockets doing a solo performance tomorrow. Promise to check things out for Sceners—will report to you later.