

Richard Pryor

Q— I am a die-hard fan of the O'Jays. Whatever happened to William Powell, now replaced by Sam my Strain? When did they get started professionally?

A— You've got a lot of company; the O'Jays have sold a lot of records since they began their recording careers in the midsixties. William Bowell died after an extended illness and was subsequently replaced in the

Their first big hits included "I'll be sweeter Tomorrow...' "I dig your act," and "Look Over Your Shoulder."

Reportedly the group has left Gamble and Huff's Philly International label and may be recording on CBS Epic label shortly.

Q— Why did Jayne Kennedy and Leon Issacc do those intimate pictures in Playboy magazine? Do they want to be the black John and Bo Derek, or was that money talking? J. Grant

A.— Whoa! There has been a lot of controversy about the Kennedys' "girlie-mag layout." We blinked a bit, too.

Kennedy said in an interview with the Los Angeles Sentinel that the pictures were excerpts from his and wife Jayne's new



The Ojays

CELEBRITY

LOCKOUT

film "Body and Soul." They were published, he said to generate publicity for the film. They have done that.

On the positive side, LIK reminds us that he wrote, produced and starred in the movie. "I was able to put together more than \$2 million for the making of "Body and Soul," he said. "It's a good movie and we're able to hire 20 other black people including our director John Bower." No small feat in Hollywood these days.

Q— I recently saw Richard Pryor in Bustin Loose. Did he make this movie before or after his accident? There were lines to get in. Do more people go to his moview now? Hos has his style changed?

New York, N.Y.

A— Most of "Bustin' Loose"
was filmed before Pryor's accident in June '79. After the accident, he wore turtlenecks in the film to hide scars on his chest.

Richard is a bigger box office draw than ever, tho films billing him as the star have generally made money. "Car Wash," which billed him as the star, but featured him for only about five minutes drew large numbers. "The Wiz" and "Wholly Moses" did not fare as well, perhaps in part because audiences knew after "Car Wash" that star billing did not guarantee large does of Richard.

"Silver Streatk," the 1976 release in which he starred with Gene Wilder, drew large numbers in the theatre as well as on television. "Stire Crazy," also with Wilder, earned a whooping \$100 million in seven months. "Butin' Loose" was the number one film in the country at press time, having earned \$20 million, including \$2 million each of its first two weeks in New York City

Presently, Pryor is at work on a new film, "Some Kind of Hero," which he may be. Reportedly, he is scheduled to meet with a number of Los

Angeles street gangs this month to discuss ways of bring peace to the black community.

Q—I love gospel music and I'm so glad to see it become popular enough to be heard on television and more radio stations. However, I don't hear much from the old favorites like the Silvertones and the Clara Ward Singers. Are they still around? I.M. Robinson

A— The two groups you mention are still singing and can be heard on gospel tours arund the country this summer.

It is true that gospel music is more popular with a larger number of people than ever. It has become so commercially successful that many booking agencies and record companies are devoting themselves exclusively to gospel. However, you might not recognize the names of many of the artists. Four British groups are recording gospels lyrics to "new wave" music. They are Bill Mason's Band, Ishmael, Rev. Counta & the Speedoze, and a group called the Giantkiller.

Giantkiller.

Of the top 40 "inspirational" albums on a trade magazine's national chart of best sellers, fewer than ten were by black artists, and even fewer have been singing gospel for longer than five years.

Long-timer Andrae Crouch, however, has reportedly signed a multi-million dollar contract with Warner Bros. Records and is scheduled to record a tune penned by Smokey Robinson, "A Molehill to a Mountain."

Q— Lately, I've seen a lot of advertising posters of a singer named Garland Jeffreys. But I'm not familiar with him. Is he a new reggae star?

M. Reid

A— Garland Jeffreys is a 37year-old native New Yorker who
looks like a reggae star because
of his dread lock hairdo. His
music, however, is more
mainstream rock with an occasional rock-raggae beat. His
new album, "Escape Artist," on

All letters should be addressed to Jason, DAWN Magazine, 628

N. Eutaw St., Baltimore, Md. 21201. All questions are wel-

come, but while Jason cannot provide individual answers,

questions of general interest will be used in this column.



By JASON:

Jayne Kennedy

Epic record is being strongly promoted, hence the posters.

Q— You don't talk about jazz much. Like, what is happening with jazz greats like Max Roach, Oscar Peterson and Lionel Hampton?

P. Dobson

A— We talk about what you, our readers, want to talk about—from your questions, remember?

Let see: Max Roach is doing a few dates with his drum corps, M'Boom. Oscar Peterson continues to play jazz clubs in this country abroad; ditto Lionel Hampton. Incidentally, they along with Sarah Vaughn, Freddie Hubbard, Dizzy Gillespie and others are scheduled to play the North Sea Jazz Festival in Amsterdam as we write.

Chaka Khan, encouraged by the reception of her funked-up version of "A Night in Tunisia," says she will record more jazzoriented albums after her final LP with Rufus, scheduled for release in the fall.



Clara Ward

First Pilot Was A Woman

In 1974, a group of young women formed an aviation awareness club. When informed that the world's first licensed black pilot of record was a woman named Bessie Coleman, they immediately adopted her name for their organization.

Research into the Bessie Coleman story revealed the presence of many of Bessie's relatives and descendents living in the Chicago area. A liaison was established which led to a treasury of information on Bessie's exploits.

This effort culminated in a special Bessie Coleman memorial program conducted at Chicago's "Du Sable Museum of Afro-American History" The date was April 29, 1979. In attendance were black people representing all segments of the aviation industry.

At a time when America afforded something less than equal opportunity to all its citizens, along came one Bessie Coleman. Born January 26, 1896 in Atlanta, Texas of an Indian father and a Negro mother, Bessie grew up in a deeply religious environment. She was baptized in the Baptist church at the age of 12 years.

An avid reader, Bessie was well aware of the many accomplishments of black people in an adverse society. Thus it was that she grew up with a urge to improve the lot of her people. A fierce pride germinated and burned within her.

It was shortly after World War I that her thoughts turned to the then fledgling aviation industry. Bessie was well aware of the exploits of Eugence Jacques Bullard, a black American who flew as a fighter pilot with the French Air Force in World War I.

But alas, no one in America was willing to teach a young black female to fly an airplane. After many frustrations she finally enlisted the aid of Robert S. Abbott, founder and publisher of the Chicago Defender newspaper. Abbott contacted a French flying school which agreed to train this determined young lady.

Upon completion of a French language course, Bessie withdrew her savings from the black-owned Binga bank, then located at 35th and State St. Chicago, Ill. and sailed for France.

While in Europe, she received flying lessons from French and German flight instructors. Anthony G. Fokker, the famed Dutch aircraft engineer who designed many of Germany's World War I airplanes was one of Bessie's tutors.

Remember the name Bessie Coleman, for whenever the names of women pilots are listed, hers is left out. She was the first licensed black pilot in the United States, and a pilot group in Chicago remembers.

By Rufus A. Hunt

She returned to the United States with an International Pilots License issued to her by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale June 15, 1921. Bessie Coleman was the first American woman to earn an international pilots license.

From 1922 to 1926 she barnstormed, lectured, and performed flying exhibitions around the country. Her goal was to raise enough money to open a flight school to train black people in the field of aviation.

In April, 1926 at the request of the Jacksonville Negro Welfare League, Bessie went to Florida to prepare an air show for the leagues "May Day" celebrations. She was to perform a benefit flying exhibition.

On the morning of April 30, 1926 about 7:30 a.m., Bessie Coleman

And William D. Wills took off from Paxon Field in an antiquated World War I surplus army airplane.

Wills had arrived in Jacksonville the day before, after
having flown the airplane
from Dallas, Tx. During the trip
he had made forced landings at
Meridian and Farmdale, Miss.
because of engine problems.

Wills had been flying about a year and was employed by the Southern Aircraft Company. The flight had taken 21 hours.

At about 2000 feet the airplane entered a nose dive. According to witnesses at about 1000 feet, the nose tucked under thus catapulting Bessie from the rear seat minus a parachute. For some reason her seatbelt failed to save her. Wills rode the air-



plane down and was killed when it struck a tree.

Wills look over the side of the aircraft after Bessie had fallen. They thought he had regained partial control of the craft and might have landed safely except for hitting the tree. A carelessly thrown cigarette ignited a fire which consumed the wreckage before it could be determined what caused the accident.

Bessie's badly mutilated body landed 100 yards North of Broadway Ave. at a point one block from Edgewood swamps.

Following services in Florida, Bessie's body was brought to Chicago for burial. She was eulogized by the late Rev. Junius C. Austin Sr. at Chicago's Pilgrim Baptist Church before interment in Lincoln cemetery. During the 1930s, the "Challenger Air Pilots Association" would annually fly over Lincoln Cemetary on Memorial day and drop a floral wreath in tribute to brave Bessie.

This group of black pilots led by Cornelius R. Coffey, continued the custom well into the 1960s. As members of the group retired from active flying, the custom waned.

The custom was recently revived when aviation historial Rufus A. Hunt flew over Lincoln Cemetery on the 54th anniversary of Bessie's death and dropped a floral wreath in tribute.

On May 2, 1981, the "Chicago American Pilots Association" lifted off from Gary Municipal Airport, formed up and flew to Lincoln Cemetery. The flight was a tribute to the worlds first licensed black pilot of record. Bessie Coleman died 55 years ago in pursuit of a dream, but her spirit lives on.

It is perhaps fitting and proper that a group of black pilots who today live that dream should pay tribute to this great aviation pioneer.



Members of the family of Bessie Coleman watch flowers descend from a flight of private planes in memory of the aviation pioneer. L to R: Marion Coleman, niece; Vera Ramey, Grandniece; Arthur Freeman, nephew; Gigi Coleman, Grandniece, and Carol Ramey, grandniece.