Young stars making good in Disney ice show

"I had auditioned with Ice Capades and they said I wasn't good enough. So I auditioned for other shows," says 23-year-old Eric Lee Smith, one of two black skaters in Walt Disney's Great Ice Odyssey at the Baltimore Civic Center through Sunday, Jan. 16.

A show for all ages, the ice skating revue is a celebration of the 55th anniversary of Disney's Minnie and Mickey Mouse characters.

This is Smith's first season with the revue, but its the second season for 20-year-old Marion Johnson Jr., a former silver medal skating competition finalist. Like many young skaters, Johnson began at his neighborhood rink in Atlanta, but when the rink closed, he pursued skating with group lessons and then private lessons in free style and figure skating. It was then Smith began competitive skating. The tall and slender former Marine Biology major hopes to move on and become a model in another year or two.

"I want to see my name in flashing lights," says the effervescent Smith. A graduate in psychology, Smith plans to stick with the ice revue for a major role; but if it doesn't turn out he'll consider returning home to Cleveland to go to school, or getting an agent in New York to pursue a career in show business.

Still, both young men insist the guiding force in their lives has been their mothers: Smith's mother who is a psychoanalyst and Johnson's mother who has remained very supportive of his interest in skating.

Walt Disney's Great Ice Odyssey tours the country 11 months and includes five to six weeks of rehearsals.

The star studded cast of Disney cartoon characters tells the story of Minnie and Mickey Mouse's 55th anniversary in Dismeyland and the festivities planned by Cinderella, Daisy and Donald Duck, the three little pigs, Pluto, Goofy and other Disney charecters, when the Evil Queen of Snow White fame, becomes jealous and tries to put an end to it all.

This week on black talk shows

By Vanessa Johnson

Look At It This Way: Topic today is on "Shake & Bake". Guests include Glen Dumphy, Robert Clay and Robert Dashiell. Hosted by Samuel Daniels and Vernon Debsen. Saturday, 5:00-5:30 p.m.-Ch. 11.

— —

Black Horizons: How the media influences our society, will be the topic. Guests include Wiley Hall, Delores Ramsey and Lorraine Branham. Hosted by Dwayne Wickham. Saturday, 7:30-8:00 p.m.-Ch. 11.

— —

Gospel Variations: Guests include soloist Robert Smith; and the Raymond Wise Singers. Hosed by Al Stewart. Sunday, 8:00-8:30 a.m.-Ch. 11.

— —

City Line: Discussion on Black-Korean Relations in Baltimore. Guests include Hosuri Pak, President of the Korean Society; Judge Billy Murphy, Jr. and several other members of the community and store owners. Astrologist Marvin Gaye's "Sexual Healing". Hosted by Jaki Hall, Dan Henson; Entertainment with Tim Watts; World and News Report with Ten Mentier. Sunday, 12:00-1:00 p.m.-Ch. 13.

— —

Say Baltimore: Interviews with folks who went to the City's New Year's Eve Party at the Ethnic Festival in the Inner Harbor. Hosted by Les Parsons and Bob Green.Sunday, 2:30-3:00 p.m.-Ch. 2.

Carolyn Marces talks on charts for 1983. And video tape review on

News and World Report with Ten Mentier on "City Line", Sunday, 12 Noon on Ch. 13.

Black Horizons' host Dwayne Wickham on Saturday, 7:30 p.m. on Ch. 11.

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The program in philosophical Theology will sponsor its second annual Martin Luther King Jr. Symposium on Friday, January 14, 1983 - 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. in the James Weldon Johnson Auditorium. Guest speaker, Mrs. Mary Conaway, Registrar of Wills for Baltimore City.
Theme: Politics in the 80's: strengthening the new partnership between people and government. Distinguished panelist, special music, reception following.
Open to the Public
Dr. Lorenzo C. Handy
Chairperson
Symposium Committee
Rev. Howard G. Norton
Program Coordinator
Dr. John J. Furlong
Chairman of
Advisory Board
Dr. Calvin W. Burnett
President

Highlights of 1982...year was tough!

(Continued from page 12)

came in for the Bud Superfest Aug. 7 at the Capitol Center in D.C. Carrie Lucas... in

Carrie Lucas, Mrs. Dick Griffey, head of Solar Records visited AFRO office in August

private life Mrs. Dick Griffey... head of Solar Records came to Baltimore and toured the AFRO home office to promote her new record "Show Me Where You're Coming From".

August 13, 1982 was the AFRO-AMERICAN's 90th Birthday... the actual founding of this chain of newspapers in Baltimore-Washington-Richmond and New Jersey. It was celebrated with ceremonies in War Memorial Plaza and the 49th Annual AFRO Clean Block Honors Day. Parade started at AFRO office at 11 a.m. and with more than 5,000 people participating tied up traffic downtown for more than 1 hour. The end of the parade was in War Memorial Plaza and the last units were still leaving the AFRO home office.

— —

The AFRO Clean Block Program is a public volunteer service run by the AFRO-AMERICAN Newspapers in Baltimore involving more than 10,000 volunteers in more than 400 blocks throughout Baltimore and five housing projects. Workers pledge to keep their blocks clean. In 1982, from March, 1982 thru Aug. 6, AFRO Clean Block Captains, Co-Captains and Advisors met at nine city-wide meetings; were honored at the AFRAM Festival. Blocks won cash awards for block parties, and AFRO Honor Flags. During the campaign leaders got 500 T-Shirts; 180 brooms, 1,000 packs of seeds, $4,500 worth of white paint; Gino food certificates, 3,000 movie tickets and 500 Colt tickets.

Thirty-six individuals were honored who had worked in AFRO Clean Block from 5 to 45 years. It was noted that the same neighborhood problems were discussed in March were still problems in September, 7 months later. Neighborhoods were upset by city-owned vacant houses; overflowing sewers, dirty alleys, weeds on city-owned lots, high grass on Amtrax and other railroad properties a growing dope traffic, in the best and worst of neighborhoods and loss of jobs.

Final reports continued in Tuesday's AFRO.

"Ernie Mcenie" Jeffrey Osborne seems to be telling members of the press. Osborne is front, second from right. Hosteos Gwen Franklin, top middle. Having fun are Mildred Worrell, Gwen Wilkins, Kimberly Fields, Bob Scott, V - 103; Larry Wilson, V - 103; Alfie Williams, WWIN; Sue Wood, WEBB, Al Marks, A & M Records, Renate Butler, AFRO Advertising Manager.

(Photo by Ida Peters)

Sammy Davis Jr. is on stage with Mrs. Estelle Street at Nov. 24 concert. But, the AFRO first announced the sold out concert in July.

Lou Gossett Jr. will surely be nominated for an Oscar for "An Officer and a Gentleman."

George Wallace, brash new comic opened for George Benson in D.C.

700 AFRO Clean Blockers enjoyed "Tron" a week ago at the Mayfair Theatre. This week 1,000 youngsters saw "E.T." at the New courtesy of J. F. Theatres.

Pancho Diggs' funeral services recall heyday of swing era

By Bob Queen

EAST ORANGE, NJ — Less than three weeks following the burial of famed Newark musician, The Late Bobby Plater of the Basie Band, a large number of both old and new era musicians again mourned the loss of Pancho Diggs, 68, remembered by the dance fans for his great orchestra and the crowded old Skateland Ballroom on Montgomery and Somerset Sts., Newark, on Monday and Friday nights.

While although Plater held the alto sax seat with The Barons of Rhythm in those days (1938-1942), he often played with Pancho on some engagements and joined other alumni of the Diggs' band to join some of the leading orchestras of the age of swing — Chippie Outcalt and Howard Scott, Billy Eckstine; Ike Quebec; Cab Calloway and Count Hastings, with Tiny Bradshaw to name a few.

Final services locally for Diggs were held at The Messiah Baptist Church, Oak St. and Central Ave., EO, on December 30, with Rev. Harry L. Batts delivering the eulogy.

Scores of one-time musicians, many still playing in the area, present, filled the pews while music was supplied by a trio consisting of Vinnie Burke, bass; Clem Moorman, piano and drummer, Hank Brown.

Among the soloists were famed former Duke Ellington vocalist, Al Hibbler and the noted organist, Jimmy McGriff. Also in attendance, some who joined the family at the viewing on the previous day were Bill Johnson, who is a former Diggs band member; Leon Eason, trumpet player; Hal Mitchell, both trumpet players; Danny Gibson, Bill Carson, Duke Anderson, Benny Jackson, T. O. Swangin, Robert Darden, Carl (Tiny Prince) Brinson, Roscoe Jennings, famed DJ Bill Cook, Joe Ransome, Charlie Shavers and Butch Robinson, saxophones.

(WEBBER Photo)
PANCHO RITES — One of the last photos taken of Newark Bandleader and Musician Union official, Pancho Diggs, was taken several weeks ago at the opening ceremonies of the Club 88, East Orange. Diggs died in Veterans Hospital on December 30, 1982.

Thomas, Calvin Hughes, ex-bandleader Frank Clark, Chops Jones, Mike Thomas, Carol Mitchell, singer and many other well-known entertainers.

Also among the mourners that filled the Messiah Baptist Church were many who came because they recalled the glory days of the Pancho Diggs Orchestra, and the happy sessions at the Skateland Ballroom. They recalled the music as given out not only by Diggs, but such stars as Outcalt and Hastings, Bob Roebuck on drums and trombonist Woodrow Wilson who in later years played with bands around Philadelphia.

Then there was that one great favorite number sung by Diggs' popular vocalist, Emzy Waters, "Swanee River," the old song of the Delta levee. But Diggs' fame spread far beyond Newark and Skateland and the private club affairs that hired his musicians.

In 1930, Diggs' Orchestra was selected to tour the country as the musical aggregation behind the great singer and star of the screen, the late Nina Mae McKinney. The group was often booked into Harlem's Savoy Ballroom and as at Newark's Skateland, for a long engagement played regular weekly dates at Harlem's Rennaisance Casino.

However, the personnel of the old Skateland band, a session where other musicians often "sat in," included besides Pancho on sax, Jackson (Flap) McQueen, who has recently retired as a Central Ward tavern owner, bass; Merrill Worthen, who left music for the beauty culture business, on guitar; Billy (Weasel) Ford, whose own aggregation in recent years has played all over the country and abroad; Slim Purnell, Luther Willis and Joe James, trumpets; Joe Halaway, Woodrow (Fats) Wilson and Chippie Outcalt, trombones; Rev. Bell as "Johnny Bell" was former arranger and pianist for the famed "Billy Williams Quartet," the first black singing group to appear on a weekly National TV show with Sid Ceasar and Imogene Coca.

Born in Newark, Pancho was the son of Alton and Bessie Diggs and was a graduate of New York University and for a number of years has served as a representative of Musicians Local No. 16. He was also a life member of New York Musician's Local 802 and The National Council of Negro Women.

For several years, he was also employed by The New Jersey Law Journal.

Interment was in Madison, VA under direction of the Cushnie Funeral Home of Sanford St., East Orange.

Diggs is survived by a daughter, Sheila Diggs Maggie of East Orange; one granddaughter, Starr Maggie and his life-long devoted friend, Callie Keaton; two foster children, Shelby Ratliff and Byron Keaton; a son-in-law, Steven Maggie of East Orange; an aunt, Minnie King of New York; two uncles, Lucius and Marvin Gray; three nephews and two nieces of Madison, VA and the Dixon and Gray families of Newark.

(AFRO Photo)
SADDENED — Famed ex-Ellington vocalist Al Hibbler sings at funeral services for the late Newark bandleader Pancho Diggs at the Messiah Baptist Church, East Orange, NJ.

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New political climate paves way for Johnson

By Martin Evans
AFRO Staff Writer

Two new faces will appear in the chambers of the City Council when the municipal legislative body convenes for 1983 business on Monday.

But the face of one of the two is never on the city's political horizon than that of the other. Edwin Johnson, who with fellow second district Eastsider Nathaniel McFadden became the city's newest councilman, has risen to one of the city's top positions with almost no organized political experience under his belt.

And many may wonder just who is this new guy on the block in Baltimore's political landscape.

But the 1982 citywide election proved that conventional political wisdom can be turned on its head, as several strangers to the political arena were swept into office on a tide of grassroots activity and coalition efforts.

And although Johnson lost a primary bid for an 46th district delegate seat his campaign instincts, organizing abilities and dogged grittiness caught the eye of former City Councilman Nathan Irby.

"I told Edwin that maybe he should run (for a 46th district seat) if he wanted to change things," Irby said. "But he surprised me. He really did it."

Irby characterized the job of a councilman as an omnibudsman position requiring a capability to deal with constituents' problems ranging from neighborhood crime to residents' complaints of stray dogs and uncollected garbage. The former councilman expressed confidence in Johnson's ability to cope with the seemingly endless variety of problems.

"Edwin is good with people," Irby said. "I've seen him work."

Irby responded to his positive appraisal of Johnson's abilities by giving Johnson the nod when choosing a successor to his City Council seat from among some 30 candidates in late 1982.

Irby vacated his second district Council seat to assume his post in the state senate representing the 45th legislative district.

Johnson is in many respects an unlikely candidate for the Council. He is not an attorney or a businessman. He does not even have a bachelor's degree like most of his councilmanic peers.

Rather, Johnson, a father of two adolescent children who describes himself as a product of the anti-war 1960s, has worked at the General Motors Broening Highway plant for the last 17 years.

Recently he has been occupied as a joiner in the plant's paint department, a position responsible for sealing seams between auto body parts and preparing them for painting.

But the attainment of one of the city's highest offices by a relatively unknown individual should not be surprising in light of the results of the autumn election.

Several individuals who had no deep involvement in traditional machine politics, such as State's Attorney Kurt Schmoke, Super Clerk Saundra Banks and Judge Kenneth Johnson had galvanized effective coalitions to help sweep themselves into office.

And Irby overcame state senate incumbent Robert Douglass to win his senate seat after defying the odds and walking away from the power brokers of the Eastside Democratic Organization.

Irby formed a grassroots effort, now referred to as the East End Forum, which captured the imagination of 45th district voters and delivered votes to send Irby to Annapolis.

Rather than having become involved in city politics by climbing the rungs of an existing political organization Johnson said he credits the experience of the activist 1960s with honing his interest in the workings of community life.

"I was a product of the '60s which made us concerned about what was happening around us in the country and the world," Johnson said. "But I had no idea that I would wind up in this political arena. As I worked in a lot of community groups I ran into a lot of stumbling blocks, though. I found that a lot of politicians were not interested in really getting involved."

In fact it was the work he did with community projects that effectively substituted for a more formal political indoctrination.

Johnson cited efforts he made with neighborhood residents in seeking the removal of stables housing the livestock of a group of merchants called "Arabs" who sell produce from horse drawn carts.

He said this and similar projects were the kind of grassroots activism that was his baptism in city politics.

The stables became a mid-1970s issue on the Eastside, Pitting residents, who saw them as a source of vermin and foul odors in their neighborhoods, against historical preservationists and the merchants who argued that the stables' dislocation would threaten the existence of the "Arabs."

But Johnson said he saw it as an issue involving local versus central control of neighborhoods.

"I figured if the people of the community said they wanted the stable out, that was it. There should have been no more discussion," Johnson said, pushing the cause of local community control.

"I think the people who actually live in a community should dictate what goes on in that community, not some people who don't."

Johnson said it was his commitment to finding new political leadership to shake an entrenched and lethargic political structure on the Eastside that eventually prompted him to run. The freshman councilman said it was only in the late spring of last year that he finally decided to seek an Annapolis seat himself.

"It wasn't just a matter of getting another politician elected. It was a matter of getting a real choice. As I went around to the various church and community groups looking for someone who would run I kept hearing people say 'Edwin, why don't you run. So I did," Johnson said, reliving the moments with obvious enjoyment.

"The rest is history, you could say."

History, yes. But history with a twist. Johnson lost in his bid for a ticket to Annapolis. But he showed the right people the stuff he is made of, and in doing so won big.

Councilman hopes budget chief slot filled by a black

City Councilman Norman Reeves, vice chairman of the Council's budget and finance committee, told the AFRO he has no personal choice for the city's next budget chief other than he or she be black.

George Piendak, the city's budget chief for six years, left that job at the end of December to take an executive position at a Philadelphia investment firm.

Charles L. Benton, the city's finance director, is reported to have said 160 applications have been received nationwide from persons interested in replacing Piendak.

Of those applicants, one "strong" candidate is said to be Thomas L. Schmidt, the state's corrections secretary. News reports have it Schmidt plans to leave his state job, which he accepted as only temporary in 1980.

He could not be reached for comment at AFRO prestime.

There is some opposition to Schmidt as the next budget director or even as a strong candidate.

A high ranking state official told the AFRO that Schmidt is ideologically opposed to programs to help the poor." The official called Schmidt a "tough and tight budget man" who has made "no bones about" his stand against programs designed to aid the poor.

Based on the city's demographics, the official wondered if Schmidt was the man for the job.

Reeves said he does not know Schmidt personally and is not familiar with his background.

"My concern ... is that there is some recognition of filling the balance of blacks in upper levels of city government," he said.

Reeves said an "imbalance" of blacks exists in the city's finance department and none of its top positions are occupied by blacks.

The decision of who will replace Piendak rests with Mayor William Donald Schaefer and Benton, Reeves said. The Council does not have a say in the selection.

Benton was reported to have been studying the applications of about 12 finalists and hoped to make a decision soon. He could not be reached for comment at AFRO prestime.

The new budget chief will have a staff of about 35 analysts and clerical workers and presides over the preparation of Baltimore City's $1 billion budget. The job pays more than $50,000 a year.

SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS — Dundalk Community College has selected five students to receive scholarships for 1983, it has been announced by DCC Director of Financial Aid Judith Munsker. Two of the students are Catherine Chapman, left, and Deborah J. Barnett, both recipients of the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Co. scholarship.

Two deans appointed at Sojourner Douglass

Sojourner - Douglass College (formerly the Homestead - Montebello Center of Antioch University), currently the only fully accredited, predominately black, full-time adult evening college in Maryland, announces the appointment of two new deans.

Sojourner - Douglass College recently underwent changes in its organizational structure. As a result, Dr. Charles W. Simmons, president, in concurrence with the Board of Directors appointed two new deans: a dean of academic affairs and a dean of student affairs.

The position of dean of academic affairs has been filled by Dr. Andrew C. Jones from Talladega College, Talladega, AL, where he was assistant to the president for grant administration.

Dr. Jones received his degree from Temple University Graduate School of Urban Education. He brings extensive administrative skills in higher education to the college.

Sojourner - Douglass College is designed to serve a very unique segment of the adult community incorporating both traditional and non-traditional instructional modes.

Dr. Jones said he believes the institution must take a pro-active role towards redefining adult education and utilizing other innovative approaches in assisting the adult community - educationally, computer assisted instruction, and high tech career preparation.

Dr. Jones also believes the college can impact more upon the adult community as a developmental arm. One approach might be to initiate community needs assessments and implement action oriented solutions. He hopes that he can help facilitate this development.

The position of dean of student affairs has been filled by Dr. Bernard M. Gross from Lincoln University, where he was dean of student services.

Dr. Gross received his degree from Temple University and has done post doctoral studies at Columbia University Teachers College.

He was formerly a director of Antioch Graduate School of Education in Philadelphia, Pa., and is therefore very sensitive to the educational needs and concerns of the non-traditional students such as those serviced by Sojourner - Douglass college.

Dr. Gross sees the need to build a larger degree of cohesion among the computing students at Sojourner Douglass College, and will immediately begin working towards that end.

He said he will continue to uphold the positive institutional image by maintaining the high academic standards in order to continue to produce quality products.

Stable director confident charges are unfounded

Eddie Harrison, director of the Windsor Mills Stables, said he is "extremely confident" that charges filed against him by the city's Bureau of Animal Control last month are unfounded and will be dismissed.

The bureau filed 11 counts of animal cruelty against Harrison in Baltimore District Court and seized all 10 of the horses housed at the stable in the Windsor Mill section of Leakin Park on Dec. 14.

After completion of a two-day administrative hearing on Dec. 27, Harrison told the AFRO everything will be okay.

"I'm extremely confident all will be okay," he said. "The evidence, in my opinion, is overwhelming and is supported by inspections by the state."

Harrison was referring to several inspections conducted by Beverly Raymond, an inspector for the Maryland Department of Agriculture Board of Inspection of Horse Riding Stables.

According to copies of inspection reports signed by Ms. Raymond on Dec. 3, 8, and 14, the stable generally received good marks on adequate shelter, it being cleaned regularly and dry, the availibility of food and water and that there was no excessive manure accumulation.

However, in a letter dated two days after the state's last inspection, the chairman of the State Board of Inspection of Horse Riding Stables, Virginia B. Thackery, wrote Harrison that several areas of the stable were below standard and needed immediate improvement.

She did note that Harrison had displayed a willingness to correct all problems.

Shortly after the city filed its charges against the stables, Lloyd H. Ross, chief of the Bureau of Animal Control, which also had inspected the stables, told the AFRO that horses at the stable were either malnourished, sick or disabled.

"Our decision to seize the horses was based on a veterinarian's examination," he said.

City inspectors from Ross' office said they found the stables unsanitary.

"There was manure up to my ankles and the horses were in stalls without food and water," Victoria Evans, a city inspector, said.

Harrison said the difference between the city and state's inspections is due because of the city's inexperience in handling riding stables.

He said the city's handling of "the whole matter was totally irresponsible."

Beverly Camp, a spokeswoman for the city's health department, told the AFRO the hearing officer, Dr. Katherine Edwards, will make a decision in the case 15 days after the completion of the two-day hearing. That should be on or about Jan. 14.

She said the Windsor Mills Stable is closed because of cold weather and not because the department has the facility shut down.

"We have not closed it," Ms. Camp said. "We confiscated the horses involved. The purpose of the administrative hearing is to see whether the stable should be relicensed."

If convicted in District Court of animal cruelty charges, Harrison faces a maximum penalty of $1,000 in fines and 90 days in jail on each count.

Greenstein Organization Award nomination sought

Nominations are being solicited by the Health and Welfare Council of Central Maryland, Inc., for the twenty-seventh annual Harry Greenstein Organization Achievement Award. The deadline for submitting nominations is Jan. 17, 1983.

The award is presented to a central Maryland (Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford and Howard Counties) governmental or voluntary organization for its outstanding service to the community. It consists of a certificate of organization achievement and $450.

Programs submitted for nomination must show demonstrated accomplishment through improved conditions or services. They may benefit a neighborhood or a broader geographic area. Nominations can be submitted by the candidate organization or others.

An award committee chaired by Rebecca E. Carroll, Ph.D., and comprised of Health and Welfare Council board members and community representatives will select the 1983 recipient. The award will be presented at the Health and Welfare Council's annual meeting in March.

Provident Hospital's Church Hill Blood Pressure Program received the 1982 award. It was cited for establishing a volunteer operation of free blood pressure screening centers in churches in Baltimore City and 14 Maryland counties.

The award was established by the late Harry Greenstein, of the Health and Welfare Council as well as its first president.

Additional information and nomination forms can be obtained by calling Mrs. Green, Health and Welfare Council receptionist, at 752-4146.

Caucus voting records rated high

A full 88 percent of Congressional Black Caucus members are liberals, according to ADA's 1982 Voting Record, and the remaining 12 percent are moderates.

The average score for caucus members in 1982 is 81.5 percent; the comparable 1981 figure was 83.8 percent. (ADA said this relatively small downward movement was due largely to the re-election campaign of William Clay (Mo.), whose normally high ADA score declined because of many 1982 abscences. Redistricting forced Clay to run for re-election in a new district where whites outnumbered blacks.)

Here are the scores for caucus members in 1981 and 1982. Note that two caucus members are not included:

Katie Hall (Ind.), elected in a special election in 1196 and reelected in November, was eligible to vote on only three of the issues selected, and no percentage rating was calculated for her.

Delegate Walter E. Fauntroy (D.C.), who chairs the caucus, is not allowed to vote on the floor of the House.

	1981	1982
Shirley Chisholm (N.Y.)	60	75
William Clay (Mo.)	95	65
Cardiss Collins (Ill.)	85	90
John Conyers (Mich.)	90	80
George W. Crockett, Jr. (Mich.)	70	80
Ronald V. Dellums (Calif.)	95	85
Julian C. Dixon (Calif.)	90	85
Mervyn M. Dymally (Calif.)	55	65
Harold E. Ford (Tenn.)	85	80
William H. Gray III (Pa.)	90	85
Augustus F. Hawkins (Calif.)	85	70
Mickey Leland (Texas)	95	90
Parren J. Mitchell (MD.)	95	90
Charles B. Rangel (N.Y.)	95	100
Gus Savage (Ill.)	65	75
Louis Stokes (Ohio)	90	85
Harold Washington (Ill.)	95	85

The Kennedy decision stirs new action among Democrats

By Norman Hill

The recent announcement by Senator Edward Kennedy that he will not seek the presidency in 1984 has thrown wide open the quest for the Democratic Party nomination.

Senator Kennedy's withdrawal from the race also has thrown wide open the battle for the support of black supporters and the labor movement the two segments of the Democratic constituency which will have a decisive say in who is to be the Party's next presidential candidate.

Black Americans long regarded Senator Kennedy as something of a standard bearer. His staunch commitment to social justice and civil rights, coupled with the appeal for blacks of the Kennedy family name had made him the one potential presidential aspirant to whom blacks gravitated.

Kennedy's support within the labor movement, while less unanimous than among blacks, also was certainly quite substantial. And although former Vice President Walter Mondale clearly has many allies among blacks and in the unions he hardly has a lock on the support of these constituencies.

The withdrawal of the front-runner from the Democratic sweepstakes has potentially a two fold effect: First, the race for the nomination will be opened to new faces and lesser known candidates. Second, the race and political discourse may also be much more substantially dominated by ideas rather than personalities, an enormously healthy development.

With national unemployment edging toward eleven percent and well over twenty percent for blacks, the task of the Democratic Party is to develop and adopt a ranging program for economic recovery and social justice. Todate the Democrats have been in something of a state of disarray. Nothing resembling a coherent strategy for coping with our economic difficulties has emerged from that party.

Any candidate who takes the Democratic nomination will have an important role in shaping and articulating the Party's socio-economic agenda. But the views of the candidates on that agenda will also be shaped by the labor movement and by blacks.

For in seeking to win the support of the blacks and unions potential candidates for the Democratic nomination such as Walter Mondale, Senator John Glenn, and Senator Gary Hart will have to be open to their ideas and concerns.

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