Victorine Adams: She's Three Weeks Shy of Retirement

By Racine S. Winborne
AFRO Staff Writer

One morning this summer, Victorine Q. Adams decided that the heat was too much to bear. And as an afterthought, she realized that it was finally time to abdicate her post.

"I woke up one morning this summer a little weary. It was a very hot summer and I just wasn't up to it anymore. Campaigning takes a lot out of you," explains the petite, five foot councilwoman from the fourth district.

For the past 16 years, she has served the public faithfully, been the subject of numerous articles, and collected her share of supporters and foes.

"I've paid my dues and served my time, now it's time to have a little freedom." Seated in her small orderly office, along City Council Row, preparations for her imminent departure have already begun.

Here along the same corridor where the likes of Mfume; McFadden; McLean; and Reeves, carry on the future plans of the black community, the senior staff member has already cleared the many awards and certificates off the walls of room 523.

Asked if she was satisfied with the list of accomplishments made during her tenure with the city council, she remarks, "I don't suppose anyone accomplishes all that they set out to do.

"I felt there needed to be more blacks in the city council and in Annapolis. The problem is still there. There needs to be more blacks in all the halls. When you look at the statistics . . . we're understaffed.

It will take sometime for the transition, from politician to laywoman, to settle in. Two years to be exact. In that time, she hopes to organize her files and personal papers.

The latter have already been promised to Morgan State University and Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. Still, she promises to complete all outstanding projects and honor all previous commitments.

The list of political gains is lengthy. It includes establishing the Baltimore Fuel Fund and its offspring the Fuel Fund, Inc., one of several programs planned to aid the needy and poor; organizing voter registration; and actively campaigning for a greater involvement in the political process by black women.

TWO POLITICAL PIONEERS—Standing in the fourth floor corridor of City Hall, the first black city council president, Clarence "Du" Burns, poses with Mrs. Adams; the premier black city councilwoman who was appointed in 1967.

Born on April 28, she declines to state the exact date insisting that this reporter "go look in the old papers for the year." Since it's a woman's privilege not to disclose her age, and Mrs. Adams has repeatedly chosen to exercise that liberty with the press.

She is a native Baltimorean and a devout Westsider, "I grew up in the 1300 block of Carey Street, they called it Sandtown." Later at age eight her family moved to the 2400 block of McCulloh Street.

The former city public school teacher was educated at Douglass High School, the old Coppin Normal School and, Morgan State College.

Victorine Adams has lived both a secure childhood and a comfortable adult life in the city that she describes as being "a fine place to live in in the 1930's and a fine place to live in now."

The conversation shifts suddenly to her husband of 48 years and her mood becomes noticeably defensive and guarded. She refuses to discuss the particulars in the case pending against William L. Adams, known to intimates as Willie.

Currently he is awaiting trial on allegations that he was involved in an illegal numbers operation. She is willing, however, to comment on his supportive role as her husband.

I doubt seriously, had I not married Willie, that I would have accomplished as much. He's been very kind to me. If it hadn't been for him and his financial support, I wouldn't have been able to do the things I've been able to do."

His prominence further enabled her to mingle with many of the social giants of the past and those who were on their way up the success ladder. "I was fortunate enough to have been friendly with Henry Parks; Ray Haysbert; and the late Lloyal Randolph."

Over sixty and hovering near her seventies, Mrs. Adams brushes are the rumors that she is in failing health saying, "I don't feel as well as I did when I was 22 years old but I'm feeling fine."

Her departure is less than a month away, yet she still seems reluctant to call it quits, hedging when asked for specific retirement plans.

The former proprietress of the Charm Center boutique; founder of the Colored Women's Democratic Campaign Committee of Maryland and co-founder of Woman Power, Inc., might have a few more good political years in her.

But Victorine Adams says this is it. Come Dec. 8 her time will be devoted to her pet project, the fuel assistance program; her step-daughter and grandchild; her husband and a few hobbies.

"I like to dance ballroom style and dabble into creative writing. I'd like to join one of those aerobic classes," she muses. After so many years of public service, why not!

"I'VE BEEN WORKING AS A CIVIL SERVANT SINCE 1946."

Tall tales told by talented blacks

By Martin Evans
AFRO Staff Writer

Ten-year-old Arthur Tapera took a trip to a Southern village last Saturday. There he saw a spider gobble up a plate of beans, the spider's favote meal, which was so hot it burned his hair off. And then, 11 year-old King Cheek watched a boy named Jack, squeeze 500 head of prime beef cattle through a tiny knothole, much to the consternation of an evil king.

The two, and more than a hundred others from as far away as Alaska, sat spellbound while 16 professional storytellers took turns swapping tall tales at Morgan State University last weekend.

For two days listeners took a break from twentieth century reality, slipping off to a Never Never Land of the imagination.

The weekend Festival of Storytelling organized by Baltimore griot Mary Carter Smith, was designed to keep people in touch with their storytelling past.

Storytelling, often accompanied by singing, dance and drama, is traditional among West African and rural American blacks. History, messages of danger, and notions of good and evil are woven in their often humorous imagery.

The verbal art flourished in a culture which did not depend on the written word, Smith said.

"Storytelling fascinates people. It's been an art for thousands of years, before we had television and radio," Smith said. "And this is not only for children. We have children here but the audience is mostly adults." The element of pure entertainment is what has kept storytelling from being relegated to an obscure corner of academia, subjects of the infrequent curiosity of pipe smoking professors.

According to one storyteller, who combs regions in Tennessee North Carolina and Georgia searching for black folklore, people like being wrapped in a spoken web of imagination.

"I go into the mountains and talk to the mountain people. They are very willing to tell the tales, and I still love listening to them," Jackie Torrence, a storyteller of ample proportions from Granite Quarry,S. C. said.

Torrence said she learned to tell good stories by listening to her grandparents.

Apparently, they were good teachers. During a half-hour performance she rolled and twisted her huge black body, flashed her dark eyes, and embellished her verbal fantasy with a voice that alternately boomed and whispered in aural counterpoint.

The stories are rich with humor and ring with a homespun familiarity. They feature characters which are archtypes in the black, experience: stern, but goodhearted grandmothers, impish characters who live by guile; people who take great risks to help others, and sleepy-headed children who just can't get out of bed in the morning.

ALICE MCGILL, a Baltimore storyteller, was one of 16 storymasters who spent last weekend entertaining folks young and old with tall tales.

Listening to the tales is like visiting old relatives, some audience members said.

The characters often prevail despite overwhelming odds. Their combination of humor and optimism helped take the harsh edge off of slave life and helped seal their place in black Americana.

"Many of the characters are small and weak; helpless, as were the slaves who created them. We get a vicarious pleasure in seeing them outwit the slave master," Smith said.

People like the tales because they recognize themselves in them, Torrence said. "Jack is little, unimportant and unemployed. And that is the average man," Torrence said, glowing with perspiration following an energetic performance.

People apparently also like to be soothed by the human voice.

"I am a mountain high...I am a jungle stream...I am a cooling breeze...I am beautiful," said Linda Goss, another Baltimore storyteller. Her voice whispered like the rustling of wind in a moonlit grove.

As she spoke most of the listeners closed their eyes, drifting free on an imaginary breeze.

He left home Oct. 8 and hasn't been seen since

Joseph Robinson walked out of his daughter's house at 455 Marble Hall Road sometime after 3 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 8 and has not been seen since. "He's wandered off before, but the police have always found him within a couple of hours," said his daughter, Mrs. Celeste Evans.

Robinson left home in a short sleeve shirt, a pair of pin-striped pants and a Nike cap. He had no money and no identification. He is 5 feet 6 inches tall and weighs 150 pounds.

"He's a quiet man," said another daughter, Ms. Arlene Robinson, with tears welling up in her eyes. "He's a good family man, but he's gotten senile since our mother died a year ago. "He will say all of his family is dead now, even though he has six sons and two daughters, all living in Baltimore," said Mrs. Evans.

Robinson is a man of simple tastes, according to his family. He likes to walk, watch tv and stroll around the Inner Harbor. He retired ten years ago from the Terminal Corporation where he was a warehousman.

"We've looked everywhere for him and been to the police," said his son-in-law, James Evans, "but we haven't come up with anything."

Maybe you can help. If you have seen, or think you have seen Joseph Robinson, contact his family at 455 Marble Hall Road.

Joseph Robinson

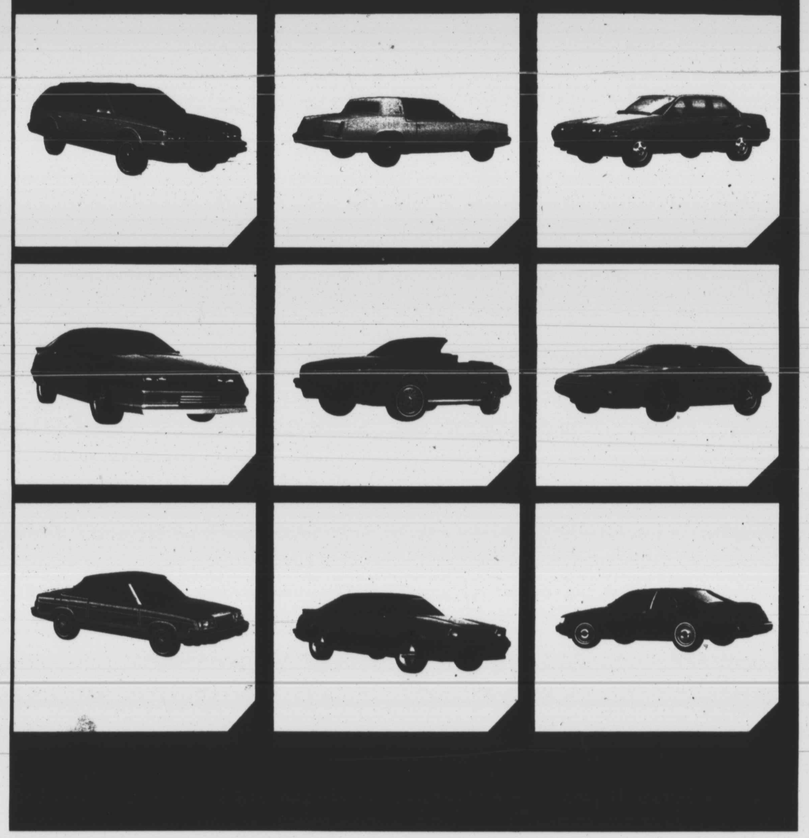
Md. Xmas economy is flourishing

(UPI) — The improved economy and reduction in unemployment apparently has Marylanders in the Christmas spirit, with some merchants predicting record-breaking sales.

Edward J. McNeal of the Retail Merchants Association of Maryland said, "There are a lot of positive signs that this could be a record-breaking year. There's a general optimism among customers, a lessening of inflation and a reduction in unemployment, so we feel there will be across-the-board increases."

McNeal said that many stores have hired larger numbers of temporary workers to help out with the Christmas shopping rush than they did last year.

At the J.C. Penney store at Baltimore's Eastpoint Mall, 52 temporary employees have been hired compared to 37 last year. "Things have improved on this side of town. Our sales started increasing early spring and have continued to improve since then," said George Golden, Manager of the Penney's store.

Distributors
ARE NEEDED IN THE
BALTIMORE COUNTY AREA
MUST HAVE OWN TRANSPORTATION
CARRIERS ALSO NEEDED
Fill out and mail today for more complete information: ☐ Distributor ☐ Carrier ☐ Age
628 N. Eutaw St.
Baltimore, Md. 21201
Attn: MRS. DEBORAH M. LOVELACE
NAME----------
ADDRESS----------
CITY----------TEL----------
STATE----------ZIP----------
OR CALL— 747-4499

DAWN MAGAZINE